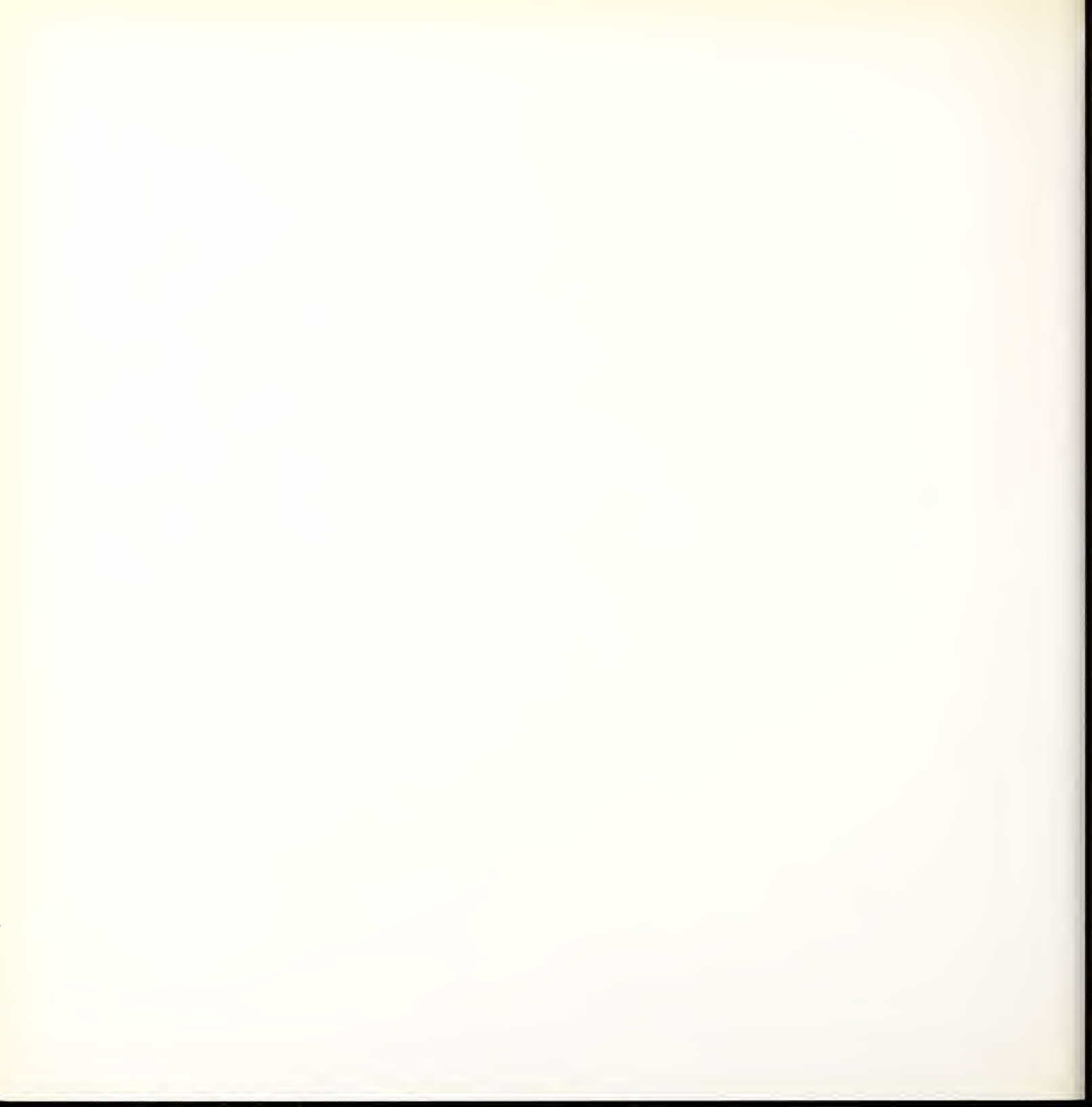# MEDIEVAL ART
MEDIEVAL PEOPLE

The Cloister Gallery of the Toledo Museum of Art

medieval art
medieval people

The Cloister Gallery of the Toledo Museum of Art

Richard H. Putney

Notes to the Reader:
1. Quotations from the Bible are taken from the *Douay-Confraternity* version. It is the English rendition of the *Vulgate*, the Latin Bible of the Middle Ages.
2. Christian beliefs, ritual, and stories are described in the historical context of medieval culture, deliberately avoiding modern critical commentary.

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acknowledgments

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Finally, I dedicate this book to my family, both immediate and extended, with special attention to two extraordinary people. First is Carolyn M. Putney, the Museum's Associate Curator of Asian Art; she is also my wife, best friend, talented colleague, and muse. The love of my life, she provided equal portions of inspiration, support, and helpful criticism. Second is Carolyn's mother and my friend, Marcia Papsidera. To her I offer the book as the only possible answer to her persistent question: "When will it be done?"

Richard H. Putney, October 2002

PREFACE

Since its installation in 1932, the Cloister Gallery has been the setting of group tours, University and Museum classes, weddings, social gatherings, and, of course, visits by thousands of families and individuals. Its popularity is due in large part to the exhibition of distinguished objects, most of them originating in western Europe during the later Middle Ages. The gallery's most striking feature, however, is an installation of medieval architectural components, shared with but a handful of American museums, notably The Cloisters of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Philadelphia Museum of Art; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; and The Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts.

In spite of its unique combination of medieval art and architecture, the Cloister Gallery has rarely been published. The most recent study was Ricki D. Weinberger's "The Cloister," published in the *Toledo Museum of Art Museum News* in 1979. As it has long been out of print and explored only the the arcade capitals, there has been a real need for a new, more comprehensive work.

This book, written by Richard H. Putney, takes a new approach. While it covers essential aspects of style, chronology, and historical setting, its central focus is on the relationship of various medieval works in the collection to the people—including churchmen, monks, noblemen, peasants, and artists—who made up medieval society. The book thus tells a great deal about those who commissioned works of art, the artists who made them, and the people depicted in them. This approach gives insights into human values in a particular historical setting and permits a richer understanding of these works of art.

In large part, this book is the product of the Museum's long relationship with the University of Toledo, whose art program has been located on the Museum campus since 1921. Dr. Putney has been an outstanding member of the University/Museum community since 1979, teaching many courses on medieval art, often with his fellow medievalist Roger Ray, director of the University's Humanities Institute.

Another collaborator in the production of this book is Clarence Kennedy (1892–1972), a renowned photographer who spent several years at the Museum studying and photographing its collections. His time in Toledo fortunately corresponded with the acquisition of the medieval arcades, which he photographed before and after their installation. Many of his excellent black-and-white photographs are printed in this book, which therefore celebrates not only the art of the Middle Ages but also the photography of the early twentieth century. We continue to be indebted to such artists, scholars, and curators.

Roger M. Berkowitz, Director

Fig. 1. Installed in 1932, the Cloister Gallery testifies to ardent American interest in medieval art during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The limestone and marble columns, plinths, and arches are sections of arcades from three long-demolished or abandoned buildings in southern France that date between about 1150 and 1400.

1
THE CLOISTER GALLERY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

The Cloister Gallery, designed in the 1920s, enchants visitors to the Toledo Museum of Art (fig. 1). For many, its spatial effects, subtle lighting, and precious works of art evoke the spirit of the Middle Ages. Central to the gallery's aura of serene spirituality are the architectural elements drawn from the medieval world. Rows of arches—called *arcades*—form the sides of the square court, which focuses on a marble wellhead. Each arcade is covered with a sloping tile roof supported by a rugged timber frame. Although the gallery is one of the few in the Museum with no natural light, its open court, rustic floor, arcades, tiled roofs, and curved ceiling combine to suggest the outdoors. Through a trick of lighting, the ceiling emphasizes this effect; with the gallery darkened, it can be lit to imitate a sweeping twilight sky of deep, glowing blue.

The designers of the gallery arranged it to resemble the central courtyard of a medieval monastery, a type of spiritual community in which monks or nuns withdrew from the world to seek eternal salvation. In their lives of prayer, contemplation, work, and learning, such a courtyard—called a *cloister* (pronounced CLOY-stir)—was the symbolic center of their lives. Given the gallery's

Since things (in principle) survive us, they know more about us than we about them. They carry within themselves the experiences they have had with us, and really are the book of history opened in front of us.

—W. G. Sebald

powerful association with medieval spirituality, one can easily imagine monks or nuns pursuing their daily rounds.

THE ARCADES

Essential to the gallery's evocative atmosphere are its arcades. Three are medieval, their weathered stones acquired in France between 1929 and 1934. The fourth, built by Toledo craftsmen to complete the ensemble, is of wood. (For a diagram of the arcades and capitals, see pages 62–63.) Closest to the gallery entrance—on its north side—is a row of seven arches from Nôtre-Dame-de-Pontaut (pronounced Pohn-TOE), a monastery in the southwest corner of France. Dating to about 1400 and executed in a style known as the Gothic, its pointed arches are supported by paired columns topped by carved capitals (fig. 2).

On the west side of the gallery—that is, on the right when seen from the gallery entrance—is a robustly proportioned arcade of six round-headed arches composed of alternating stones in gray and white (fig. 3). They are supported by thick columns whose large, richly carved capitals depict fantastic animals and plants. The original location of this arcade,

Fig. 2a. Capital with the Romance of Barlaam and Josephat, 1931.84.

Fig. 2. Arcade from the Cistercian abbey of Nôtre-Dame-de-Pontaut in Gascony, built in the late 14th or early 15th century. Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1931.81–88.

executed in a stylistic era called the Romanesque, is uncertain. However, its proportions and sculptural style show a very close relationship to arcades from the monastery of St.-Michel-de-Cuxa (pronounced KOO-shah), providing strong evidence of its origin in southern France about 1150.

The third medieval arcade, the one furthest from the entrance, is located on the south side of the gallery. From the monastery of St.-Pons-de-Thomières (pronounced tome-YEHR), it also has semicircular arches, is Romanesque in style, and was also built about 1150 (fig. 4). Its paired spiral

columns carry capitals carved with biblical scenes and episodes from the life of St. Pons, the monastery's patron saint (see pages 33–34).

The gallery and its lighting work well for the display of medieval objects. As in a Gothic cathedral, the dimly lit walkways are punctuated by bright accents of color. Spotlights play on shimmering objects of rock crystal, enamel, or gold, while colored glass, lit from behind, glows with radiant luminosity. Through its architecture, materials, and play of light and shadow, the Cloister invites the serene contemplation of works from an era far removed from our own.

Fig. 3a. Capital with winged lions, 1934.93C.

Fig. 3. Arcade from an unknown building in the style associated with the Benedictine abbey of St.-Michel-de-Cuxa in the Rousillon region, about 1150. Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1934.93A–E.

The Middle Ages

The Cloister Gallery and its art represent one of the most intriguing periods in European history. The medieval era had its origins in the chaotic collapse of the western Roman Empire during the fifth century A.D. Lasting about a thousand years, the period ended with the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although the era's time span is relatively clear, preconceptions about it have often obscured both its diversity and its accomplishments. For one, it was not an age of unchanging, homogeneous unity. Europe changed dramatically during the Middle Ages and developed societies with diverse cultural points of view,

facts well supported by the variety of objects in the Cloister Gallery. And while most medieval people were religious—and some supremely spiritual—the frequent characterization of the Middle Ages as a Christian "Age of Faith" blurs our understanding of the period. Indeed, the eras that preceded and followed the Middle Ages were just as concerned with religion. Christianity was certainly important to medieval society and culture; but Catholic Christianity in western Europe differed remarkably from Byzantine Orthodox Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean, and Europe was also deeply affected by Judaism, Islam, early forms of Protestantism, and the rise

Fig. 4. Arcade from the Benedictine abbey of St.-Pons-de-Thomières near Béziers. Two of the capitals date about 1150; the other four were made about 1220. Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1929.203–208.

Fig. 4a. The Martyrdom of St. Pons, 1929.207.

Fig. 4b. Aaron shows his flowering staff, 1929.204.

of a secular outlook. Finally, the very use of the term *medieval*—from the Latin *medium aevum* ("middle age")— has a negative connotation. Renaissance scholars coined it to characterize what they perceived as the barbaric period that separated the glories of their own era from those of ancient Rome. Even today the word can be used to connote something primitive or superstitious. Unlike their Renaissance predecessors, however, modern scholars now recognize both the strong continuity between the world of the Roman Empire and that of the early Middle Ages. Many of the achievements ascribed to the Renaissance are, in fact, rooted in late medieval culture.

Granted, the medieval world was less sophisticated than the contemporary world in many ways. However, in rebuilding Europe from the ashes of the Roman Empire, medieval people were profoundly accomplished, not least in terms of artistic and architectural production. Throughout the Middle Ages, artists and builders created a prodigious quantity of works like those on display in the Cloister, much comparing favorably with works of any age.

In the pages that follow we will explore important aspects of the art and architecture of the Cloister Gallery. We will begin by examining a thirteenth-century *Book Cover* for

insights into the essential nature of medieval art and its origins. Then we'll explore art and architecture in the Romanesque and Gothic eras, the two stylistic periods that are best represented in the Cloister Gallery. Finally, we'll investigate the types of people who made up medieval society and see how their beliefs and aspirations were essential to artistic production in the Middle Ages.

ThE EUChARIST ANÒ ITS FURNIShINGS

Medieval churchmen commissioned elaborate works of art to dignify and embellish Christian rituals, which are collectively referred to as the *liturgy*. Central to public worship was the *mass*, a service making use of incense, music, prayer, processions, colorful garments, the reading of sacred texts, and sumptuous objects. Designed to nourish the soul, its drama and spectacle could also dazzle the senses. The climax of the mass was the *Eucharist*: at the altar, a priest consecrated bread and wine that were transformed into Christ's body and blood, a miraculous re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

The cup illustrated at right is called a *chalice*. Its opulence is typical of metalwork used for the Eucharistic wine. (Similarly, sumptuous plates called *patens* were used to hold the Eucharistic bread.) Crafted of gilded silver in a Gothic style, this chalice was made by an unknown artist on the island of Sardinia around 1400.

The chalice was made in several parts: an elaborate foot, a hexagonal stem embellished with a grip (composed of six projecting knobs), and the cup itself. Much of its surface is engraved with leaves of a Mediterranean plant called *acanthus*, and enamel plaques adorn its foot and knop. At the center of the base is a plaque depicting the Crucifixion. Surrounding Christ are numerous implements, including a ladder, spear, sponge, whip, hammer, and nails--gruesome reminders of Christ's suffering in his flagellation and crucifixion.
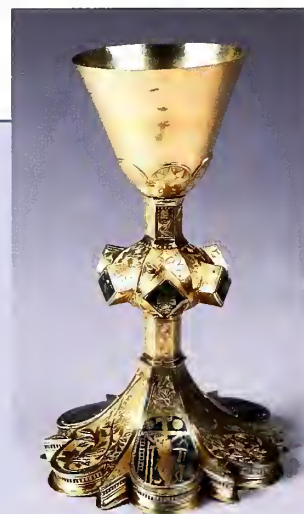
Fig. 5. *Chalice*, about 1400, Sardinia (Alghero). Gilded silver with enamels, H 35.5 cm (14 in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1955.223A.

Fig. 6. *Book Cover with the
Crucifixion*, early 13th century,
France (Limoges). Champlevé
enamel on gilded copper, mounted
on wood. H 32.3 cm (12 11/16 in.).
Purchased with funds from the
Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward
Drummond Libbey, 1950.254

Medieval Art: Its Characteristics and Origins

The vast majority of the works in Toledo's Cloister Gallery originated in western Europe during the latter half of the Middle Ages—from roughly the years 1000 to 1500—when artistic and architectural production were most extensive. Although the works on display are nearly as diverse in style and function as medieval society itself, they share a number of important characteristics. A fine example is a French *Book Cover,* made in the early 1200s, which embodies essential aspects of medieval art and reflects the historic circumstances in which it came into being (fig. 6; for the technique, see page 56).

First, the work is Christian in its subject matter and function. This fine example of metalwork originally embellished and protected a manuscript, a Gospel Book or other sacred text. Appropriately, it depicts an episode from the crucifixion of Christ as described in John 19:25–30 (see sidebar page 15). Christ has just died on the cross, his passing mourned by the Apostle John to his left and his mother Mary to his right. What makes the work's spiritual imagery typical of later medieval art is that its sacred character is combined with three other qualities: a rejection of naturalism, the use of decorative color and form, and an interest in narrative relying upon the human figure.

The *Book Cover* is not realistic in its depiction of the human figure, use of space, or color. The representations of Mary and John, for example, are unusually elongated and flat. Their feet seem to dangle weightlessly over the earth, rather than being supported by it. The "hills" beneath them clearly suggest rolling terrain, but are exaggerated and abstracted in their simple, repetitive shapes. Like the figures, the hills are flat; using no shading, they look as if they had been cut from paper and glued to the surface in thin, overlapping layers. The lack of realism is neither arbitrary nor a result of lack of skill. With few exceptions, artists and patrons were not interested in art that merely imitated what the eye saw in the natural world. Instead, they favored visionary imagery that expressed what the spirit felt and the mind believed. Religious art of the Middle Ages often represents a separate and symbolic world, one in which eternal truths are conveyed in a lyrical and expressive manner.

The *Book Cover* is also richly decorative. Denying the appearance of the real world, it displays bright color, has polished surfaces, shows a dynamic use of line, and relies upon ornamental effects. The depiction of the Crucifixion, for example, exploits the rich play of gold against green and blue, with accents in red. The figures, plated with gold through a process called gilding, read as strongly outlined shapes against the enamel background, with details of drapery and hands engraved into the surface. Particularly noteworthy are the elegant linearity of Christ's torso and

Europe about 1200.

the outlined shapes of angels hovering above the cross. Surrounding the scene are rows of repetitive floral motifs that form an ornamental frame.

The content and appearance of the *Book Cover* are the result of conscious stylistic choices and reflect the origins of medieval civilization and its art in the transformation of the late Roman Empire, when artists and patrons relaxed their traditional interest in realism. At the same time Christianity developed from an obscure, sometimes persecuted, cult into the state religion. Among the Church's early accomplishments were the development of administrative structures, religious doctrine, the institution of monasticism, and monumental church architecture.

Equally important, it fostered a new type of imagery, the last great creation of Roman art. Early Christian art generally depicted sacred persons, biblical stories, or images of divine authority. Relying upon the stylized human figure, it became one of the fundamental sources of medieval art.

Another decisive factor in the development of medieval art was the migration of Germanic peoples—the so-called "barbarian invasions"—into the Roman Empire. Beginning in the 300s, groups such as the Goths, Franks, and Anglo-Saxons entered the Empire, took control of its western provinces, and established a cluster of kingdoms that were the first states of medieval Europe. Most of the newcomers were illiterate and pagan, their art consisting largely of

portable metalwork intended for a warrior aristocracy. Their art rarely made use of the human figure or narrative and had no use for realism or monumental scale. Featuring highly stylized and two-dimensional motifs—primarily animals and geometric patterns—it boldly exploited metals and gemstones in an art that relied upon the abstract effects of line, pattern, and decorative color.

A third factor contributing to the creation of medieval art was the conversion of the Germanic newcomers—as well as of the Celtic peoples of Ireland and Scotland—from paganism to Christianity. The process began during the 400s, and, depending upon location and circumstance, was essentially complete by the year 1000. Once Christian, some members of these "barbarian" societies became literate and called for the production of books needed to sustain Christian worship and education. Some also commissioned the building and decoration of churches and the production of works of art with Christian content. Germanic and Celtic artists emulated the Christian art of the late Roman Empire, combining its stylization, symbolism, and narrative content with traditional interests in abstract pattern, line, and expressive color. Artists of early medieval Europe produced a body of works that reflected the synthesis of Roman, Christian, and "barbarian" traditions, with particular success in the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms during the 700s and 800s (see fig. 47).

Unfortunately, devastating raids by Vikings and other peoples disrupted early medieval society and, by the late 800s, Europe entered a period of economic, political, and artistic decline. About a century later, however, in the years immediately preceding the year 1000, medieval Europe entered a stunning period of economic expansion that fostered extraordinary cultural accomplishments. During two great stylistic eras that followed—called the *Romanesque* and the *Gothic*—artists and builders produced remarkable works, including Toledo's *Book Cover,* the stone arcades, and most objects on display in the Cloister Gallery.

PROBLEMS IN BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION

Biblical imagery is typical of medieval Christian art, but artists often interpreted biblical texts rather than illustrated them in a literal fashion. The *Book Cover*'s depiction of the Crucifixion provides an excellent example. Following a venerable pictorial tradition, it shows the crucified Christ flanked by his mother Mary and St. John. But what was the source of this image? The Crucifixion is an important episode in all four of the New Testament Gospel narratives, written by Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. However, Mary alone is named in the accounts of Matthew and Mark, and neither Mary nor John is mentioned in Luke's. Only John 19:25–30 mentions both, and somewhat obliquely:

Now there was standing by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, thy son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, thy mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home . . . .

In medieval interpretation, the Bible's mention of a disciple "whom [Christ] loved" was a reference to John, the Gospel author. This understanding of the text is made clear in the *Book Cover*'s image of the disciple, who holds a book. Although John could only have written his Gospel after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (all of which are described in his Gospel narrative), the book's depiction makes clear that the figure on Christ's left is St. John, the beloved disciple, who was an eyewitness to this event.

RAOUL GLABER AND CANIGOU

[On] the threshold of the [year 1000] . . . it befell almost throughout the whole world, but especially in Italy and Gaul, that the fabrics of churches were rebuilt . . . . So it was as though the very world had shaken herself and cast off her old age, and were clothing herself everywhere in a white garment of churches.[1]

Thus wrote Raoul Glaber, a monk living in Burgundy during the early eleventh century. Having witnessed the great building boom of the early Romanesque era, he wrote grandly of the reinvigoration of medieval society and its culture. The expansion of the western economy in the decades bracketing the year 1000 fostered the building of many new churches and monasteries, first in northern Italy, southern France, and northern Spain, and then spreading to the rest of Europe.

A fine example of early Romanesque architecture is the monastery of St.-Martin-du-Canigou (pronounced KAHN-ih-goo), founded by Guifred, Count of Cerdagne, in the first decade of the eleventh century. For security and isolation, the monastery was dramatically sited on a spur of Mount Canigou, one of the tallest mountains in the eastern Pyrenees. Builders quarried the mountain itself, thus leveling a plateau large enough for the monastic complex, while also providing a good supply of building stone. In his later years, Count Guifred withdrew from the warrior aristocracy to this remote and inspiring place, where he lived the quiet, contemplative life of a monk. At death, he was buried in a tomb he himself had hewn from the living rock of Canigou.

Intimate in scale, the monastery has many features we associate with later Romanesque monastic architecture. The church building, for example, has the thick walls, robust proportions, and simple geometric forms typical of the boldly formed Romanesque buildings of the later eleventh
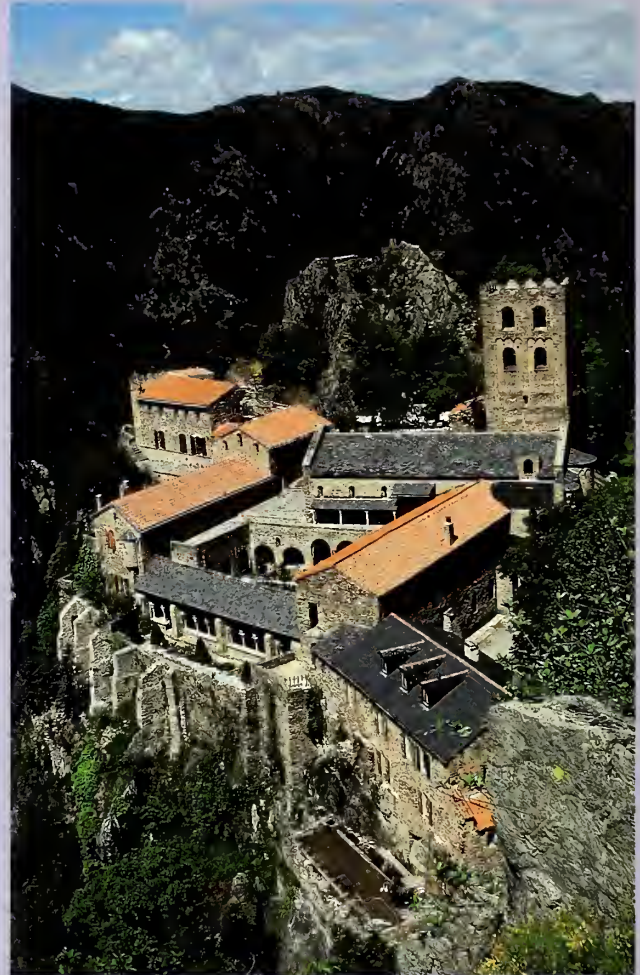

Fig. 7. The Monastery of St.-Martin-du-Canigou, early 11th century.

and twelfth centuries. Constructed entirely of stone, its interior spaces are covered with vaulting, a type of masonry ceiling using the technology of the arch. The monastic complex also includes a bell tower, anticipating the vertical accents of later churches, and a cloister surrounded by arcades and walkways.

III
THE CLOISTER GALLERY AND MEDIEVAL STYLE: ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC

Close your eyes and imagine that you are traveling through a medieval landscape. If you see castles, vast acres of farmland, enormous monasteries, bustling towns, and lofty cathedrals, your imagination has taken you to the latter half of the Middle Ages. This was the era when the *Book Cover* and most other works in the Cloister Gallery were made. Historians assign the art and architecture of the later Middle Ages to two major stylistic eras. First came the *Romanesque,* a term coined in the 1800s that recognized the era's imitation of ancient Roman architectural forms. The Romanesque was an innovative era whose beginning around 1000 coincided with a major resurgence of western civilization. Extending a generation or so beyond 1200, the Romanesque saw the reinvigoration of European art and architecture. In the 1130s Parisian craftsmen laid the groundwork for a new style—the *Gothic*—that would produce the final glories of medieval art and architecture. Renaissance scholars derived its name—a scornful reference to the culture of the later Middle Ages—from one of the barbarian groups that had brought down the Roman Empire. Today, the era has a far more positive connotation. Beginning as an imaginative style for church architecture, by the early 1200s the Gothic also embraced distinctive styles in sculpture and painting. Evolving steadily, it dominated northern Europe well into the 1500s.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC

Before examining basic aspects of these important stylistic eras, it is important to note that the achievements of Romanesque and Gothic artists and builders did not stand in isolation but rather mirrored extraordinary and quite varied advances in medieval society. From the late 900s through the 1300s, for example, Europe experienced extraordinary economic growth ranging from agriculture through commercial trade. The number and size of towns grew rapidly, their streets, markets, and shops teeming with members of an expanding middle class, many of them artists and craftsmen. Portions of Europe also saw the gradual expansion of royal power, a burgeoning sense of nationalism, and an innovative emphasis on the mechanisms of government. Simultaneously, Europe expanded its international reach. Commercial shipping connected western Christendom, the Byzantine Empire, and the world of Islam. Travelers, including religious pilgrims, moved in great numbers from region to region, and Crusaders attempted—often successfully—to expand the bounds of Christendom in both the Holy Land and Spain (see map page 14).

Fig. 8. Interior of the Romanesque church of St.-Philibert, Tournus (Burgundy), early 11ᵗʰ century. The ceiling is a stone vault, and the walls and ceiling would have been decorated with paintings.

Fig. 9. Master of the Last Judgment, *Sts. James and Philip,* fragment of mural painting, about 1125, Spain (Catalonia). Fresco, H 140.4 cm (55 ¼ in.). Museum Purchase, 1956.16.

The world that produced Romanesque and Gothic art was also characterized by increasing cultural accomplishment and a growing sense of the individual. Whether in monasteries, cathedral schools, or the newly founded universities, learning attained new standards of quality. New forms of literature appeared that expanded both religious and secular reflection. They included works celebrating romance, the deeds of warriors and courtliness, and culminated in such masterworks as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. While the era showed a growing concern with secular values, it was also characterized by an expansion of personal religious devotion that took increasingly sophisticated forms.

Changes in the later medieval world touched every aspect of life, including art, a circumstance that helps in understanding the works on view in the Cloister Gallery.

ARCHITECTURE: "THE MOTHER OF THE ARTS"

Throughout the later Middle Ages, architecture was truly the "mother of the arts." Buildings reflected the developing prosperity and cultural ambition of both the Romanesque and Gothic eras, and literally teemed with paintings and sculptures that enhanced their meaning. Among the first hints of a new, more dynamic Europe was the building

Fig. 10. *Saint,* 14th century, possibly France. Stained glass, H 203 cm (80 in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1945.22.

Fig. 11. Interior of the Gothic church of St. Ouen, 14th century, Rouen (Normandy). Its thin vaulted ceiling is supported by a skeletal structure whose walls have been eliminated for stained glass windows.

boom that began around the year 1000. At the time, a few writers commented upon the increased pace of building activity (see sidebar page 16), but they could have hardly imagined what was to come. The buildings themselves, including the arcades in the Cloister Gallery, speak eloquently of the energy and creativity of medieval society. In secular architecture, builders developed the monumental castle in stone and ecclesiastical buildings in a wide variety of regional styles. Many churches were of large scale and featured stone construction, the use of the arch, an increased interest in decoration and sculpture, and diverse plans that served complex religious functions. The dramatic interiors of many churches were covered with vaults,

arched ceilings constructed of cut stone or rubble that had not been used on a large scale in western Europe since the Roman Empire.

Essential to the spiritual and intellectual life of medieval Europe were monasteries, whose purpose is further discussed in Chapter V (pages 40–44). The architectural setting of most monastic complexes focused upon a cloister, the courtyard formed by arcades that was the center of daily life. Two of the Cloister Gallery's arcades, dating about 1150, feature the technology, essential stylistic features, and variety of Romanesque architecture. One arcade is from an uncertain site, possibly the monastic priory of Espira d'Agly
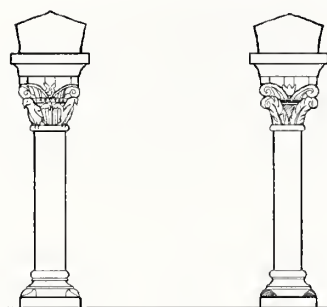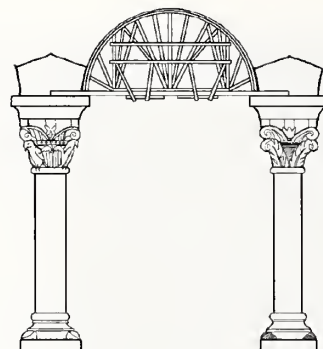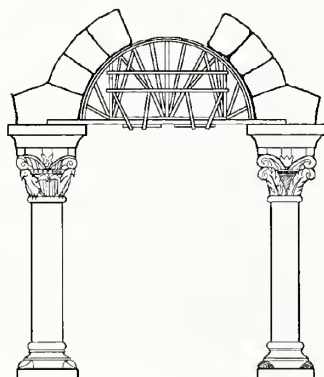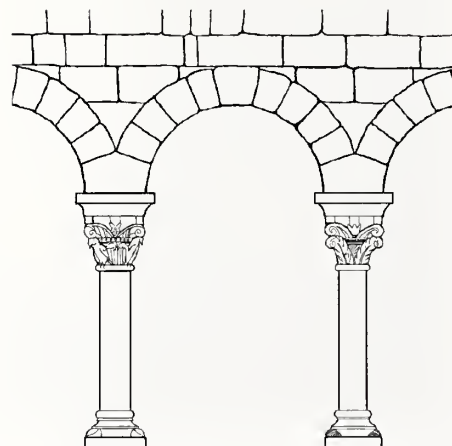
Figs. 12a–d. Steps in building a Romanesque arch.

(pronounced ess-peer-AH dye-YEE) (fig. 3). Whatever its origins, its style shows that it is the work of a group of sculptors who also executed the great monastic cloister at St.-Michel-de-Cuxa (see sidebar page 23). The other arcade is from St.-Pons-de-Thomières, a monastery near Cuxa in the south of France (fig. 4). Typical of the Romanesque, both arcades depend upon the technology of the arch, a building form essential to the architecture of the Middle Ages. More specifically, both feature round-headed arches, the type employed in ancient Roman architecture and most frequently used by Romanesque builders. Finally, both arcades use sculpted capitals and blocks of stone cut to shape on all sides, an advance over the work of the early Middle Ages.

The two arcades also have differences. The example in the Cuxa style features relatively thick columns, blocky marble capitals, and round-headed arches that are free of carved ornament. The arcade from St.-Pons-de-Thomières uses double columns of more slender proportion, rectangular capitals, and arches crowned by carved ornament. While close in date, the arcades demonstrate that the term "Romanesque" refers not to a single, homogeneous style but to a family of styles with similar characteristics.

The Arch and How to Build It

The arcades displayed in the Cloister Gallery represent the essential accomplishments of medieval architects, who used stone as their primary building material. The physical characteristics of stone, quarried in many types and colors, presented both advantages and disadvantages to medieval builders. Potentially a beautiful material, in certain contexts stone can also be a very strong one. When individual pieces are piled one upon another, as in a wall, the pieces experience *compression*, a force that squeezes them together. A medieval builder knew through experience that, in compression, stone could endure high loads (in modern terms, as much as 3,000 pounds per square inch). Thus, stone was an excellent material for foundations or for vertical supports such as walls, columns, or piers. This is made obvious by a glance at the Cuxa arcade (fig. 3), where a heavy wall and arches are easily supported on relatively thin marble columns, all of which are in compression. Without the benefit of modern physics, of course, medieval builders learned this through experience, whose "rules of thumb" were passed from generation to generation.

Medieval builders also knew that, in some contexts, stone is very weak. In modern terms, we know that stone breaks easily when subjected to the force of *tension*, a stretching force that can pull stone apart. The maximum amount of tension that stone can sustain is only about 30 pounds per square inch, and careless or inexperienced builders can easily encounter it. Tension is a significant force in the lower portion of a horizontal beam, for example, which sags under its own weight and thus stretches the lower surface of the beam. Through experience, ancient and medieval masons knew that stone could be used for horizontal spans, but only relatively narrow ones where the force of tension is kept within the margins of safety.

A central ambition of medieval builders was to cover enormous spans—the main space of a cathedral, for example, might be fifty feet wide and hundreds of feet long—and to do so with stone. The ingenious solution to this aesthetic and technical problem was the use of the arch. Composed of individual stones that arc up from one support and descend to another, the arch develops relatively little tension. Rather than stretching its stones, the arch acts to compress them. Again, the Cuxa arcade helps to see this: the substantial weight of the upper wall presses down upon the arch stones. They, in turn, channel the weight of the wall to the most desirable and strongest place: the tops of the columns. The result is an efficient and attractive structure that allows for relatively wide spans between the supports. Precisely the same principles, used on a larger scale, applied to the arched windows and vaulted ceilings of Romanesque and Gothic churches.

In reviving the use of large-scale arches and vaults, used extensively by the ancient Romans, medieval builders also had to revive the technology of their construction. The ingenious techniques required in such a building system required expertise in geometric design and the teamwork of skilled carpenters and masons. In erecting an arch of the type used in the Cuxa arcade, the masons first erected two columns, each of whose cappitals supported the first stone of the arch (fig. 12a). The next step, crucial to the erection of the arch itself, was to brace the columns in a vertical position and prepare them to receive the curving arch stones they were to carry (fig. 12b). The carpenters did this by bridging the column tops with a carefully shaped wooden cradle taking the shape of a semicircle. Called *formwork* or *centering*, the cradle spanned the space between the columns and held them in position; its upper surface had the semicircular shape the arch was to assume. To build the arch itself, masons then laid the carefully shaped stones of the arch onto the cradle, mortaring each in place (fig. 12c). Once all the arch stones were set, the arch would support itself and the centering could be removed. The masons then completed the construction process by laying stones on top of the arch, their weight locking the structure securely in place (fig. 12d).

Quite different in style from the Romanesque, Gothic architecture focused on lightness and technical efficiency. First appearing in Paris in the 1130s, its elegant combination of large windows, thin structures, light vaulting, and pointed arches led to its adoption in most of northern Europe by 1200 (fig. 11). A fine example is the stone arcade from the monastery of Nôtre-Dame-de-Pontaut (fig. 2), created around 1400. Immediately obvious is the Gothic use of the pointed arch, a component derived from Islamic building practices. While it appeared sporadically during the Romanesque period, the pointed arch became a fundamental component of the Gothic style. Also noteworthy are the slim proportions of the double columns and capitals from Pontaut. This tendency toward thinner, more elegant building parts developed throughout the Gothic period, so that late medieval church architecture often has a lacy, even fragile appearance.

ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE

Toledo's arcades also bear witness to one of the most important accomplishments of the later Middle Ages: the revival of architectural sculpture, largely absent from European art since the late Roman Empire. The capitals in many monastic cloisters were among the most important examples of this development.

A comparison of the capitals from Toledo's "Cuxa" arcade with examples from St.-Pons shows the variety that characterized Romanesque sculpture. The Cuxa style features expressive, even fantastic, animals carved with robust proportions and rounded forms (fig. 3). Only two of the Museum's capitals from St.-Pons were completed in the 1100s, but they show a completely different Romanesque style from the Cuxa arcade. Representing the martyrdom of St. Pons, to whom the monastery was dedicated, they feature unnaturalistic human figures with expressive proportions, extremely large heads, and very linear carving (fig. 4a). Such works were intended for a private monastic audience, but the Romanesque also developed works intended for far more accessible locations, such as the sculpted doorways and capitals of churches.

Gothic buildings continued to feature large-scale assemblages of sculpture, which are represented in the Cloister Gallery by four capitals in the arcade from St.-Pons-de-Thomières. While a group of sculptors working in a Romanesque style had begun the sculptural embellishment of the arcade about 1150, they never finished it. A new group, interested in the emerging Gothic style, came to the monastery in the early 1200s to complete the work. Influenced by the cathedral sculpture of northern France, their work shows a shift from a higher degree of naturalism, one that emphasizes slender proportions, softer carving, and greater refinement (fig. 4b). The Romanesque figures feature linear hair and hard, abstract garment folds; consisting of pairs of arcing double lines, they divide the drapery into what seem like overlapping metallic plates. The drapery of the Gothic figures hangs in more natural, vertical folds reminiscent of ancient Roman sculpture.

PAINTING

The creation of the Gothic style of architecture, complemented by a change in sculptural style, also had a profound effect on the pictorial arts. Romanesque churches had significant expanses of wall and vault that were ideal for the display of fresco painting, works produced by painting on plaster applied to the wall (fig. 8). The Cloister Gallery contains such a work, a painting of *Sts. James and Philip* (fig. 9). It is a fragment of a much larger wall painting, dating to about 1125, from an unknown church in Catalonia, now part of northeastern Spain. The Catalan region is justly famous for its painted Romanesque churches, whose interior walls were covered throughout with sacred images. The name of the artist who executed the Toledo fresco is now lost, but scholars have designated him the "Master of the Last Judgment" after a fresco of that subject executed

Fig. 13. The reconstructed cloister at St.-Michel-de-Cuxa.

by the same artist in another church in Catalonia. His artistic style is typical of the Romanesque, employing bold color, strong linear values, and relatively flat and highly stylized figures conveying a sense of spiritual intensity.

Fresco painting continued to be used in the Gothic era, but the new approach to building in northern Europe called for tall, very thin structures designed to eliminate the wall and support row upon row of colored windows (fig. 11). As a result, the emerging medium of stained glass became the predominant feature of church interiors, relegating fresco to a secondary role. The Cloister Gallery glows with the colored light of several examples of stained glass, including images of a *Saint* and a *Bishop* that are probably fragments of a larger window (figs. 10 and 31). As in these examples, Gothic windows often contained figural imagery with elongated bodies in gracefully curved poses. Executed in colored glass, especially blue, red, green, yellow, white, or gray, such windows transformed the interior of a Gothic church into a heavenly apparition that transcended ordinary experience. In such spaces, which sometimes rose to heights well over a hundred feet, images of Christ and the saints hovered in the air, visions from another world. Emphasizing luminosity, color, and transcendent space, the Gothic church and its windows were the supreme visual expression of medieval spirituality.

CUXA AND ITS CLOISTER: FROM MONASTERY TO MUSEUM

Located in the foothills of the northern Pyrenees mountains, Cuxa was one of the most important monasteries in the medieval region known as Catalonia. In the middle of the 1100s, the monastery built a new, Romanesque cloister whose arcades had sixty-four sculpted capitals. During the French Revolution, the government of France confiscated the monastery, expelled the monks, and sold off the monastic complex. It soon fell into ruins, and people made off with pieces of the church and cloister; thus, columns, sculpted capitals, and other architectural components were dispersed throughout the region. Many other monastic sites in France suffered a similar fate.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, revived interest in the culture of the Middle Ages inspired collectors and dealers to search for and purchase building stones and sculpted capitals taken from medieval sites. One individual who did so was the American sculptor George Gray Barnard (1863–1938), who acquired many medieval artifacts in France, including numerous stones and capitals from the Cuxa cloister. Exporting his purchases to the United States, in 1925 he sold them to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who gave them to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. After careful planning, in 1938 the Metropolitan opened The Cloisters, a new museum in northern Manhattan devoted to medieval art and architecture. Its collection included architectural components from Cuxa—thirty-five sculpted capitals among them—which were re-erected as a small cloister. Meanwhile, in France, donors worked to re-acquire other capitals and stones from Cuxa. Returned to their original site and reconstructed, they can once again be seen in their original context (fig. 13).

Fig. 14. *Processional Cross*, about 1130, North Italy. Gilded bronze, H 36.8 cm (14 ¹/₂ in.).
Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond
Libbey, 1949.16.

Fig. 15. *Reliquary with St. Michael*, about 1050, Byzantine. Gilded silver with enamel
inlays, Diam. 6.2 cm (2 ⁷/₁₆ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment,
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1953.49.

ARS SACRA:
SACRED ART OF SMALL SCALE

We may conclude this brief overview of artistic style in the
later Middle Ages by comparing two of the Cloister Gallery's
smaller objects, both of which had a religious purpose. The
first is a twelfth-century crucifix of gilded bronze (fig. 14), a
fine example of Romanesque ecclesiastical art. The second
is a small shrine-like object carved of ivory, probably in Paris,
during the late 1200s (fig. 16). Devoted to the Virgin Mary
and the Christ Child, it is a Gothic *polyptych* (pronounced
pol-LIP-tick), a term designating a work with multiple
panels. Both works are excellent examples of their eras, and
both demonstrate the international associations of later
medieval art.

The artist who fabricated the crucifix was Italian. His design
has imagery on the front and back, typical of crosses used
in church processions. Romanesque in style, the work is
highly stylized, has strong linear values, and is dramatically
expressive. In addition, it shows a strong relationship to the
art of the Byzantine Empire. The artist who made the
Processional Cross—like the one who made the *Book
Cover*—represented Christ with a drooping head, a loincloth
extending from the lower abdomen to the knees, and
distinctive linear patterns emphasizing the pectoral
muscles and abdomen. Seemingly trivial, these details
occur regularly in the Byzantine art of the eastern
Mediterranean. An incredibly prosperous state, Byzantium
had an enormous influence on western Christendom and
its art, particularly during the Romanesque era, when many

Fig. 16. *Polyptych: The Virgin and Christ Child,* about 1280–90, France
(Paris). Ivory with paint and gilding, H 29.4 cm (11 ½ in.). Purchased
with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond
Libbey, 1950.304

travelers, pilgrims, Crusaders, and merchants passed through its domains. Whether through trade, movement of artists, diplomatic exchange of works of art, copying of works (fig. 15), or the use of model books, Byzantine styles made their way to medieval Europe, there to influence the appearance of many works.

Justly renowned for its great churches, the Gothic era also saw the production of far more intimate works of incredible quality. The *Polyptych of the Virgin and Christ Child* perfectly reflects the era's elegant sophistication and international scope. Less than a foot wide, the polyptych was carved out of ivory, probably in a Parisian workshop, during the late 1200s. The work was intended for private devotion, a topic to which we will return (page 54). Moveable wings flank its central shrine, whose structure mimics the slender forms of a Gothic cathedral. Traces of paint show that, like Gothic stained glass windows, the *Polyptych* would have been brightly colored.

Carved in an exotic material that is perfectly suited for fine detail, the figures in the polyptych are both graceful and worldly, bridging the realms of body and soul. The central figure of Mary is delicately elongated, graceful and idealized, but her body responds to the world in a quite natural way. Unlike the Romanesque figures in the *Book Cover* (fig. 6), Mary assumes a stance in which one leg carries the weight of her body, while the other is relaxed.

Fully human, her torso curves back gracefully to bear the weight of the infant Christ perched on her out-thrust hip. The stylish folds of her drapery accentuate the dynamic play of her stance and respond to the force of gravity. While the image accommodates sensual beauty and the natural world, its depiction of angels—one of whom reaches down from heaven to crown the Virgin Mary—assures us of its otherworldly spirituality.

Like the *Processional Cross*, the *Polyptych* has international connections, but in this case they are economic. Like many objects of the later Middle Ages, the work is made of elephant ivory, whose use depended upon networks of long distance trade. Merchants brought the luxury material from southeast Asia and the eastern coast of Africa to such ports as Alexandria, where ships from Venice and Genoa carried it to Europe. Similarly, the Gothic era saw other artistic materials, such as silk, and even finished works such as ceramics, carpets, or glassware move from Asia, Africa, or Islamic Spain to Christian Europe.

The works examined in this chapter are fine examples of Romanesque or Gothic styles. They show the essential development of later medieval art and architecture in the context of broad trends in medieval history. While style was important to the people who made buildings and works of art, as well as to those who used them, it was by no means their only concern. Works of art satisfied a variety of needs,
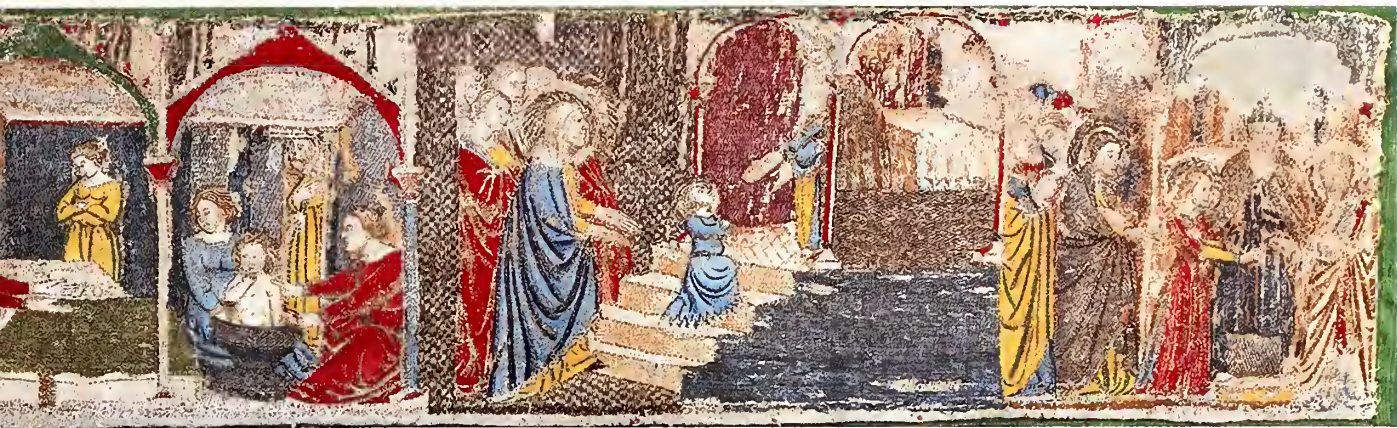
Fig. 17. *Scenes from the Life of the Virgin Mary (Expulsion of Joachim from the Temple, Annunciation to Joachim, Meeting at the Golden Gate, Birth of the Virgin, Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, Betrothal of the Virgin)*, 1330–50, Italy (Florence). Embroidery (silk, gold, and silver threads on linen), L 121 cm (47 1/4 in.), Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Endowment in Memory of her Father, Maurice A. Scott, 1954.85.

such as a desire to honor God, celebrate beauty, express power, or promote spirituality. Whatever the motivation to make them, works of medieval art have an intriguingly human dimension. The rest of this book is devoted to an exploration of some of the purposes of medieval art and to those who commissioned it, made it, or were its audience. We will begin by examining artistic aspects of the ultimate concern of all medieval Christians, the relationship of life and death.

NEW INTEREST IN PICTORIAL SPACE

A rare and delicate work in the Cloister Gallery reflects a new approach to artistic style that would eventually supercede the Gothic. An Italian embroidery dating to the mid-1300s, it displays scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary (fig. 17). Once part of an altar decoration—another portion of the same work is held by the Cleveland Museum of Art—the embroidery is about four feet long, and has figures only about four inches high. What they lack in scale, however, they make up for in solidity and monumentality. Displaying stout proportions, a strong sense of volume, relatively simple drapery, and strong interaction with space, they are very different from the sinuous figures of the Gothic (fig. 16). Indeed, they show a clear relationship to the work of the Florentine artist Giotto (pronounced "JAH-toe"), who lived from about 1266 to 1337. A contemporary of the great Italian poet Dante, Giotto is one of the most renowned artists in the western tradition. His artistic style is similar to that of the embroidery—both rely upon narrative imagery, feature robust and weighty figures, and depict rooms or buildings that convey a sense of three-dimensional space. Driven by a deepening interest in the natural world, Giotto and those influenced by him—like the designer of the Toledo embroidery—anticipated the humanistic naturalism of the Renaissance.
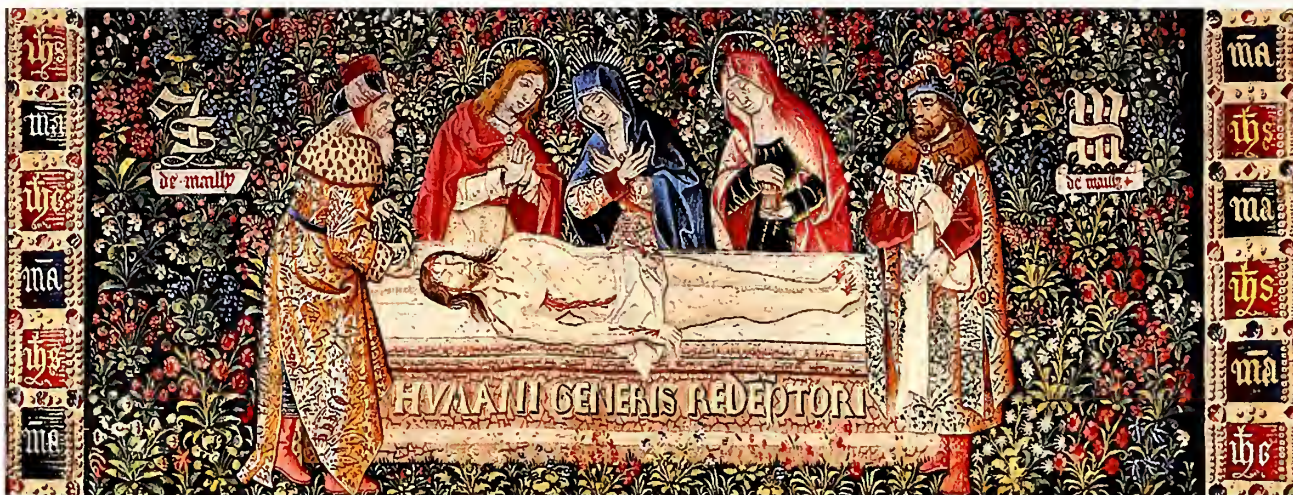
Fig. 18. *Entombment of Christ*, late 15th century, Flanders. Tapestry (wool and silk on wool), W 240 cm (94 ½ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1934.91.

IV
MEDIEVAL PEOPLE:
THE LIVING PRESENCE OF THE DEAD

In medieval Christian belief, the life, death, and ultimate destiny of human beings were central to the faith, relating to cosmic events that reached from Creation to the end of time. This would have been clear to any person visiting a church during the late Middle Ages. Walking around its interior, he or she would be surrounded by references to death and the afterlife. A church functioned as an enclosed graveyard, for example, its floors and walls lined with tombs embellished with works of sculpture. A fine example of this important type of art is a set of Italian tomb sculptures carved in brilliant white marble during the late 1300s (fig 19). So classical that they resemble the sculpture of ancient Rome, the figures on the outer blocks depict the Angel Gabriel announcing to the Virgin Mary that she is pregnant with the Christ Child. Flanked by the figures of this event, called the "Annunciation," is the seated Christ, whose throne calls to mind the words of Gabriel to Mary: "[Your son] shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, . . . and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32–33). Works such as this, produced in great quantity in the Middle Ages, served many purposes. In a worldly sense, the size and richness of tomb

Let us keep in mind how brief time is, how certain death, and how unstable our friends, and let us always be prepared . . . for man is taken from our midst like a shadow when it fades.[2]

—*from a sermon by a 14th-century preacher*

sculptures reflected the status of the deceased but also commemorated them, allowing them to linger in the memory of the living. At the same time, they expressed the piety of the dead and reminded visitors of the imminence of death.

Moving to the main altar of the church, a medieval visitor might see a large book sitting upon it, its sacred pages embellished with a cover much like the one discussed in Chapter II (fig. 6). Depicting the death of Christ, it also shows a small figure at the base of the cross, who raises his arms toward the body of Christ. Following a venerable artistic tradition, he represents Adam, who brought death into the world. Rising from his coffin, Adam acclaims Christ, who has delivered him and all of humankind from the certainty of eternal darkness. A similar motif is shown at the foot of the Cloister Gallery's Romanesque *Processional Cross* (fig. 14), a type of object that was sometimes displayed on the altar during the mass.

If the visitor were a Christian, he or she would know that the body of a holy person, or a fragment of it, was enshrined in or near the altar, and that the altar itself commemorated the death of Christ. There a priest sanctified bread

Fig. 19. *Tomb Sculpture: The Enthroned Christ Flanked by the Annunciation, with Mary (left) and the angel Gabriel (right),* about 1375–1400, North Italy. Marble, H 66.6 cm (26 ¼ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1975.72A–C.

and wine that were miraculously transformed—"trans-substantiated"—into the body and blood of Christ (see sidebar page 11).

A fifteenth-century Flemish tapestry makes explicit reference to this idea (fig. 18). It depicts the entombment of the crucified Christ by Joseph of Arimathea, Mary, and a number of followers. They have placed Christ's dead and bleeding body on a tomb that closely resembles an altar, a reference to the relationship of the Eucharist, the altar, and the body of Christ.

On or near the altar, a medieval visitor might see works of art whose imagery reinforced its association with Christ's sacrifice. For example, painted or sculpted works, called *retables* (pronounced REH-tah-bulls), were placed at the back of late medieval altars. An excellent example is the *Crucifixion* panel from the Museum's *Retable of St. Andrew*, a six-part panel painting of the late 1400s (fig. 20). The depiction of Christ's death is explicit, even gruesome, as is

its depiction of Adam's skull at the foot of the cross. Juxtaposing the dead Adam and the crucified Christ, its bold imagery would have been highly appropriate as a backdrop to the Eucharistic bread and wine. When seen in the larger context of medieval art, the *Retable* and other works in the Cloister Gallery show that a paramount concern of medieval Christians was their eternal destiny beyond the grave.

The significance of death and the hope for redemption

The medieval preoccupation with death derived from some of the most fundamental tenets of Christianity. As described in Genesis, God created the first people, Adam and Eve, as immortal beings. Tempted by the serpent and disobeying God, Adam and Eve brought death upon themselves and all of their descendants. Through his incarnation as a human being and his death on the cross,

however, Christ restored to humankind the hope for eternal life. These ideas are essential to the depiction of the Annunciation on the *Tomb Sculpture* and the representation of Adam and the crucified Christ on the *Book Cover*, *Processional Cross*, and *Retable of St. Andrew*. For medieval people, salvation came through participation in the sacraments of the church, as is clear from the *Entombment Tapestry*. Its allusion to the Eucharist, its rich representation of flowers and vegetation, and its dedication "to the Redeemer of Humankind" (*Humani Generis Rede[m]ptori*) are clear references to the life-giving aspects of Christ's sacrifice. In its depiction of an enthroned Christ, the *Tomb Sculpture* makes reference to another belief essential to medieval Christianity and its imagery: that Christ would bring time to an end and judge all of mankind.

FINAL THINGS:
THE LAST JUDGMENT

While many works in the Cloister Gallery represent the outlook of medieval people in regard to death, two works dramatically represent the fate of the dead. One is a small English panel, carved from alabaster in the mid-fifteenth century, which depicts the moment of the Last Judgment (fig. 21). One of the most important subjects in Gothic sculpture, this terrifying event is related in Matthew 25:31–46. Christ describes the awesome occasion at the end of time when he will separate the just from the wicked, consigning them to heaven or hell:

… the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory; and before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left…. Then the king will say to those on his right hand, "Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you…." [He] will say to those on his left hand, "Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

Fig. 20. Master of Geria, *Crucifixion* panel from the *Retable of Saint Andrew*, about 1475–1500, Spain (Castile). Oil on wood panel, H 92 cm (36 $1/4$ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1955.214A–F

The doors of many Gothic churches, including the great cathedrals of Paris, Chartres, and Amiens, were crowned by immense sculptural representations of these haunting words (fig. 22). The English panel is one of several sculptural works in the Cloister Gallery that shows the influence of the monumental examples found in church doorways. Somewhat worn, but showing traces of its original paint, the panel depicts the heavenly Christ enthroned on a cosmic rainbow, his feet resting on an orb that represents the universe. As in the words of Matthew and the doorway sculptures from cathedrals, Christ is surrounded by angels. While their hands are damaged, it is clear that they originally held the "instruments of the Passion," the implements used to torture and crucify Christ. The agony of his death is further emphasized by the display of his wounded hands, feet, and side. Just below Christ, a huddling

Fig. 21. *The Last Judgment,* about 1460, English (Nottingham).
Alabaster with paint and gilding, H 39.2 cm (15 7/16 in.).
Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of
Edward Drummond Libbey, 1969.230.

Fig. 22. *The Last Judgment,* from the central tympanum of the south transept,
Cathedral of Chartres (France), about 1210–15.

mass of small, praying figures—we can easily imagine their
deference and apprehension—vividly expresses the
fragility of human hope in the face of ultimate power.
Summoned from their graves, they are about to endure the
Last Judgment. Connecting them and Christ are images of
the Virgin Mary and St. John. Their presence in heaven
expresses the belief that Mary and the saints are in an ideal
position to intercede with Christ on behalf of the devout.

While the Judgment itself is not shown in the alabaster
panel, it is represented on an outstanding Gothic capital
from the arcade of St.-Pons-de-Thomières. Like many
cathedral portals, it depicts the weighing of souls of the
risen dead by the archangel Michael and the Devil (fig. 23).
They flank a balance scale, whose pans contain the tiny
figures of timid mortals. The Devil, whose hair is aflame
and whose feet are predatory talons, is helped by a demon

to manipulate the scale, hoping to claim an inhabitant for
Hell. To the right, other demons—the "Devil's angels"—
oversee the dismal procession of those sinners who have
failed in the quest for Heaven. Bound together with a long
chain, the condemned make their way around the capital,
trudging toward their doom. Before them looms the
terrifying entrance to Hell itself—the gaping mouth of a
giant dog (fig. 24). Demons with pitchforks and tongs fling
the sinners into its waiting jaws and stoke its flames with
a bellows. This vivid imagery recalls the equally vivid words
of the monk Anselm of Bec, who in the late eleventh century
recorded a fearful meditation:

*Sulphurous flames, flames of Hell, eddying darkness, swirling with
terrible sounds.... Devils that burn with us, raging with fire and
gnashing your teeth in madness, why are you so cruel to those who
roll among you?[3]*

Within the jaws of Hell, a cauldron overflows with those
suffering eternal pain, while on the side of the capital
facing the Cloister Gallery courtyard, a demon tortures a
nude woman, a personification of lust. Such dramatic
images, featured prominently, were a reminder to all of the
medieval notion of the end of the world.

Fig. 23. The Last Judgment: Weighing of Souls, St.-Pons, 1929.208.

Fig. 24. Hell, St.-Pons, 1929.208.

SAINTS AND MARTYRS: THE VERY SPECIAL DEAD

While all human beings were subject to death, a few—called by one historian "the very special dead"[4]—played crucial roles in the world of the living. These were the saints, whose importance and popularity are forcefully represented in the Cloister Gallery. Whether depicted in architectural sculpture, metalwork, embroidery, painting, or other media, images of saints surround the gallery visitor. This is not surprising, for veneration of the saints—men and women recognized for their extraordinary spirituality and religious devotion—was one of the most essential aspects of medieval Christianity. Saints were recognized for their courageous and ascetic lives, intense battles with the forces of evil, and—with God's power working through them—the performance of miracles. Exemplary Christians, their humanity, suffering, and spiritual power inspired people from all walks of life. Particularly venerated were martyrs, saints who had suffered death rather than deny their faith.

The Cloister Gallery's most elaborate artistic treatment of a saint is found in relief carvings on capitals in the arcade from the monastery of St.-Pons-de-Thomières (see page 34 and diagram pages 62–63). The capitals depict scenes from the early life and martyrdom of the monastery's patron saint, St. Pons. The imagery depends upon episodes recorded in the fifth century by Bishop Valerianus of Cimiez, a town near Nice, where St. Pons was martyred. While known today to be legendary, the story of St. Pons inspired a notable cult in the south of France during the Middle Ages.

According to Valerianus, Pons was born in Rome during the third century, an era notorious for the imperial administration's sporadic persecutions of Christians. Although his parents were pagans, Pons converted to Christianity and was baptized into the faith by Pope Pontian (230–235). As a devout Christian, Pons was courageous in his refusal to participate in pagan ritual and, remarkably, was said to have converted the Emperor Philip the Arab (244–249). A thirteenth-century capital from the St.-Pons arcade represents important elements of Pons's early life in Rome: his baptism (fig. 25), his refusal to perform pagan sacrifice (fig. 26), and what may be an image of the Emperor Philip on horseback .

Two earlier capitals, carved in a Romanesque style of the twelfth century, deal with the saint's martyrdom in Gaul, where Pons moved to convert pagans to Christianity. In the

Fig. 25. Baptism of St. Pons, 1929.205

Fig. 26. St. Pons refuses to sacrifice, 1929.205

Fig. 27. St. Pons and the bears, 1929.203

Fig. 28. Execution of St. Pons, 1929.207

late 250s the Emperor Valerian (253–259) renewed the persecution of Christians, and Pons was captured, tried, and tortured by the Romans at Cimiez. One of the Toledo capitals depicts his trial before a Roman official and an attempt to execute him by throwing him into a cage of bears (fig. 27). Miraculously, the animals refused to maul him, an incident recalling the story of the Jewish prophet Daniel's deliverance in the den of lions (Daniel 6:16–24). Empowered by his faith, Pons was finally beheaded. In a poignant image on one of the reliefs facing the center of the Cloister Gallery, a Roman soldier brings his sword to the neck of St. Pons. Kneeling in prayer, the saint is steadfast to the end (fig. 28).

Intriguingly, the power of saints such as Pons increased after their deaths. The church celebrated them for their sanctity, establishing feast days in the annual liturgical calendar— that of St. Pons was May 14—when masses were said in their honor. Christians received their names at birth, invoked them as patron saints, and prayed for their support. Hagiography, the writing of the lives of saints, was one of the most popular forms of medieval literature, and helped disseminate their stories. Some, such as St. Pons, were celebrated locally or regionally, while others, such as the Apostles, were celebrated throughout Christendom.

Two important beliefs enhanced the importance of the saints. Like those of ordinary people, the bodies of dead saints remained on earth. At the moment of death, however, saints' souls rose to heaven, where they could communicate directly with God. As a result, living Christians on earth prayed to departed saints, at one time human beings like themselves, to intercede with God. Another important belief held that prayers to the saints were ideally offered close to their remains. Indeed, so effectual were the saints that miracles were commonly reported at sites preserving their bodies. An inscription at the tomb of St. Martin of Tours, for example, reads:

Here lies Martin the bishop, of holy memory, whose soul is in the hand of God; but he is fully here, present and made plain by miracles of every kind.[5]

RELICS AND RELIQUARIES

A common form of reliquary, represented by several examples in the Cloister Gallery, is known as a *chasse* (pronounced SHAHSS). Resembling a metal building with a sloping roof, a chasse is elevated on legs and has a rectangular plan, vertical walls, and a gabled lid. It usually enclosed a rectangular wood box that housed the relic itself.

A particularly notable example in the Museum was made by metalworkers at Limoges in the early 1200s (fig. 29). On its gilded main face is a representation in colored enamels of the Crucifixion. Just above, on the sloping face of the lid, is a seated image of Christ. As in the alabaster relief (fig. 21), he is seated on a cosmic rainbow, but here he holds a book and makes a sign of blessing. The almond-shaped field in which he sits is a halo for his entire body; called a *mandorla*, it represents divine illumination. Surrounding the seated Christ are four medallions that contain, starting at upper right and reading clockwise, the head of an eagle, a calf, a lion, and a man. This representation of an enthroned, cosmic Christ and the four living creatures is an example of a motif widespread in medieval art. Called *Christ in Majesty*, it represents the vision of St. John recorded in the last book of the New Testament (known as the *Apocalypse* to Catholics and *Revelations* to Protestants). In the biblical text (4:1–11), the four creatures surround the enthroned Christ as he establishes his heavenly kingdom at the end of time. In addition to the Crucifixion and Christ in Majesty, the chasse displays, on front, back, and sides, representations of haloed saints—the very special dead—framed by the arches of the heavenly city.

Now empty and housed in a display case, the work is a beautiful, even stirring, memento of a bygone age. When imagined in its original context on a medieval altar, however, its luminous materials, imagery, and sacred contents eloquently addressed the concerns of every medieval Christian: Christ's sacrifice has opened the gates of heaven, the saints have joined him there, and are miraculously present to help others find the way.

Fig. 29. *Chasse with Crucifixion*, early 13th century, France (Limoges). Champlevé enamel on gilded copper, H 19 cm (7 ½ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1949.36.

The power of saints could be experienced at their graves but even in the presence of fragments of their bodies or belongings. Known as *relics*, these objects were the subject of passionate veneration. So important was this aspect of medieval Christianity that, from the 800s on, only altars that contained relics could be used for the sacrament of the Eucharist. Belief in the spiritual power of relics motivated religious pilgrims to travel the length and breadth of Christendom—and beyond its frontiers—to come into their presence. Their power also led to the production of special containers to protect and honor them and to manifest their power and meaning to medieval Christians. Known as reliquaries (pronounced REL-ih-kwair-ees), these containers are one of the most important forms of medieval art, and are particularly well represented in the Cloister Gallery.

Fig. 30. *Crosier Head*, 13th century, France (Limoges). Champlevé enamel on gilded copper, H 16.5 cm (6 ½ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1950.251.

V

MEDIEVAL PEOPLE: THE LIVING

The art of the Cloister Gallery clearly reflects the focus on mortality and concern for the dead fundamental to the worldview of every medieval Christian. For the remainder of this book we will see what it has to tell us about people's earthly lives, which were considerably varied. We will examine some of the key roles people played in medieval society, their ambitions, and their interests. More particularly, we will see how variations in social status motivated diverse relationships to art and architecture. Essential topics will be the kinds of people who appear in works of art, commissioned the works, their reasons for doing so, and the audiences they wished to reach. Finally, we will discuss artists—the craftspeople who made the works in the gallery—and aspects of their working lives.

To understand medieval people we must know something of what medieval people thought about themselves and the structure of their society. Medieval writers recorded various approaches, defining the human community in terms of factors such as political power, gender, noble or non-noble birth, religious affiliation, or economic function. Writing about 1020, Bishop Adalbero of Laon expressed a concise and often-repeated formulation of medieval society based upon people's functions. In commenting upon the earthly roles of living human beings, he wrote:

Here below, some pray, others fight, still others work....[6]

By this, Adalbero meant that medieval society was composed of three essential groups. Two relatively small ones made up the medieval elite: those who had a religious vocation and those secular nobles who made up the warrior aristocracy. Beneath them in the social hierarchy was the vast majority of medieval people, ordinary laborers, who in Adalbero's lifetime consisted mostly of agricultural workers. While simplistic, his scheme is useful in understanding basic human contexts of medieval art and architecture. Following Adalbero's social hierarchy, we first take up those people whose lives focused on the sacred.

THOSE WHO PRAY: PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH

In writing of a distinct group of people "who pray," Adalbero referred not to Christians in general but to the members of society who had religious vocations. They included churchmen, monks, and nuns. Churchmen—referred to as the lay clergy because they ministered to lay society—belonged to the ecclesiastical hierarchy whose lines of authority descended from the Pope in Rome through bishops to local priests. Their essential function was to administer the sacraments, including Baptism and the Eucharist, to members of the faith (see sidebar page 11).

A SAINTED BISHOP

This Gothic stained glass panel, probably once part of a larger window, depicts the image of a sainted Bishop. His garments, referred to as *vestments,* are symbols of his priestly office and episcopal authority, and derive from the apparel of the late Roman Empire. An obvious indication of his status as bishop is his pointed hat, called a *mitre.* It would have been richly embroidered and brightly colored, and, as is clearly delineated in black paint, embellished with gems. Several of the garments worn by a medieval bishop are clearly visible. The green outer one, open at the sides and dropping to the level of the knees, is a *chasuble,* whose name derives from the Latin *casula* (meaning "little house"). The longest of the undergarments is a white, floor-length tunic, called an *alb,* that has long sleeves and is embroidered in yellow near the hem. Hanging from the Bishop's left arm is a brightly embroidered strip of cloth referred to as a *maniple.* When fully dressed to participate in the liturgy, a bishop would also wear special slippers and gloves. This saint's status as a bishop is also indicated by his gesture of blessing, the ring he wears on his right hand, and his staff of office, called a *crosier.*

Fig. 31. *Bishop,* 14ᵗʰ century, possibly France. Stained glass, H 203 cm (80 in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1945.21.

BISHOPS   Bishops held powerful positions in the church hierarchy and had particularly strong associations with art and architecture. Their episcopal powers—from *episcopus,* Latin for "bishop"—included ecclesiastical control over large administrative domains, called *dioceses.* The latter consisted of numerous parishes, whose priests were subordinate to their bishop, as generally were the abbots of any monasteries situated within the diocese.

A bishop usually exercised his power from an architectural complex situated in a great town in his diocese. His buildings generally included an episcopal palace, a hospital, an almonry (a facility for aiding the poor), and a great church, called a *cathedral.* The latter, a unique building in the diocese, derived its name from the throne of a bishop, called in Latin a *cathedra.* Bishops were often intimately connected with the maintenance and artistic embellishment of their cathedrals and often led the efforts to initiate new campaigns of construction.

Bishops were also enormously important to the production of many forms of medieval art. The garments they and other clergy wore during church ceremonies, called *vestments*, were luxurious (see sidebar). As we have seen in Chapter III, their buildings were filled with a wide variety of objects like those on display in the Cloister Gallery. Indeed, it is highly probable that the lay clergy, and especially bishops, contracted with artists to produce a significant portion of them. They did so for several reasons, the two most important being to honor God and to help educate the illiterate masses in important aspects of the faith.

ART IN HONOR OF GOD   As we have seen, it was quite normal for medieval artists to use precious materials to make works of art and to embellish them with brightly colored imagery and luminous decoration. The sumptuousness of medieval art derived from artistic traditions but was nurtured by an impulse to honor God.

In the Cloister Gallery, there are many works that reflect this spiritual motivation. One is the head of a thirteenth-century crosier (pronounced CROW-zhur), a staff carried by a bishop to express the solemn nature of his office (fig. 30). Its shaft and spiraling head call to mind a shepherd's crook and symbolize the bishop's symbolic role as "shepherd to his flock." In medieval belief, the bishop was an earthly representative of Christ, and it was only through his ordained power to administer the church sacraments that members of his flock could achieve eternal salvation. The Bishop was thus an intermediary between God in heaven and humans on earth.

The *Crosier Head* depicts the archangel Michael defeating a dragon, a deed that symbolized the triumph of good over evil. Modern eyes might see in its craftsmanship, sinuous forms, brightly colored enamels, and glittering surfaces a mere expression of the power, wealth, and status of a bishop, but this would not be the case. In medieval eyes, the artistic enrichment of objects made for the use of the Church honored God, not the individual mortal who used the objects.

Other types of works frequently embellished to honor God were books. In order to conduct its worship—and for other purposes—the Church needed many types of texts, including sacred ones. Examples include the Bible, the Psalter (a volume containing the Psalms), and the Gospel Book (devoted to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Books made prior to the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century are called *manuscripts,* a term meaning they were written by hand (from the Latin *manus*, "hand," and *scriptura*, "writing"). Of course a medieval scribe could write a copy of such a text using no ornament, color, or elaborate letters, and the book would still retain its meaning and sacred character. By embellishing texts, however, with large, ornamented letters (fig. 32), or by illustrating various passages (fig. 49), the scribe underscored and celebrated the extraordinary power, meaning, and divine origin of the text. As we have seen,

Fig. 32. Illuminated initial "A," fragment of a manuscript leaf from the Book of Daniel in the Motteley Bible, late 12th century, England. Vellum, H 13.7 cm (5 ^{3}/$_8$ in.). Museum Purchase, 1926.111.

sacred texts could be further adorned through their bindings, whose covers often displayed rich imagery, luminous decoration and precious materials (fig. 6).

ART AND THE ILLITERATE   In addition to honoring God, an important motivation for the production of religious art was the instruction of the illiterate in elements of the faith. The educational potential of the visual arts was already recognized in the later Roman Empire, when many Christians expended considerable energy and wealth to embellish their churches with imagery. Among them was the influential Paulinus of Nola, who built and decorated a number of churches in the south of Italy during the late fourth and early fifth centuries. They included a church dedicated to St. Felix, which attracted throngs of the illiterate poor:

Fig. 33. *The Trinity*, about 1480, England (Nottingham). Alabaster with paint and gilding, H 53.3 cm (21 in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1969.229.

...the majority of the crowd here are peasant people, not devoid of religion but not able to read. These people, for long accustomed to profane cults, in which their belly was their God, are at last converted into proselytes for Christ while they admire the works of the saints in Christ open to everybody's gaze.[7]

Acknowledging the positive experience of Paulinus and many others, Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) sanctioned the Church's use of art for educational purposes. In a text widely distributed in the Middle Ages, he wrote:

Painting is admissible in churches, in order that those who are illiterate may still read by seeing on the walls what they cannot read in books.[8]

An excellent example of a work that conveys important aspects of the faith is an alabaster relief of the *Trinity* carved in England in the 1300s (fig. 33). Like its companion panel of the *Last Judgment* (fig. 21), it was part of the imagery embellishing a church altar. It once depicted a crowned God the Father, the dove of the Holy Spirit (originally between God and Christ), and the crucified Christ. This imagery ably represents the complex nature of the divine and, by showing the Crucifixion, demonstrates the relationship of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice to his redemption of mankind. Finally, in its depiction of two angels at the foot of the cross, who catch Christ's blood in a liturgical chalice (see fig. 5), it underscores the connection between the blood of Christ and the Eucharistic wine. Honoring God, the panel translates complex doctrine into comprehensible imagery instructive to illiterate lay worshippers.

While literacy was rare in the lay population that used most churches and cathedrals, such was not the case in the populations of monasteries and convents, whose art and architecture served different religious functions.

MONKS AND NUNS   Numbered with the clergy as spiritual guardians of society—"those who pray"—were monks and nuns. These men and women withdrew from the world to live ascetic lives of humility, prayer, and spiritual contemplation in the isolated settings of monasteries or convents. Like the lay clergy, most communities of monks and nuns developed highly sophisticated approaches to art and architecture. Some were artists themselves (see fig. 34), and monastic leaders—aiming to honor God—commissioned countless works of art. Indeed, monks were certainly responsible for the sculpted arcades from St.-Pons-de-Thomières and Nôtre-Dame-de-Pontaut (figs. 4 and 2).

The architectural forms of the medieval cloister grew out of the monastic ideology of St. Benedict of Nursia (about 480–550), who founded the Italian monastery of Monte Cassino in the early Middle Ages. There he wrote a famous treatise, the *Rule*, which is a spiritual and constitutional guide for the successful operation of a communal monastery. Composed of seventy-three short chapters, its precepts are both spiritual and practical, and depend upon the pious exercise of love and humility. Monks were to give up all personal property, live communal lives that were chaste and moderately ascetic, and give strict obedience to the abbot, the monastery's spiritual father and administrator. Essential monastic activities were to include rounds of prayer (the *opus divina,* or "divine work"), the reading of sacred works (the *lectio divina,* or "divine reading"), and manual labor (the *opus manuum,* or "work of the hands"). Practical guidelines were also established for the conduct of ordinary human activities, such as eating, sleeping, and the functioning of economic activity in the monastery (see sidebar pages 42–43).

First expressed in the 500s, Benedict's ideas were of relatively minor importance until the 800s, when hundreds of monasteries in the Frankish kingdom were reorganized according to the precepts of his *Rule.* At the same time, monastic builders created a highly functional and aesthetically pleasing scheme for the monastic environment, which became a spatial expression of Benedictine principles.

CLOISTER ARCHITECTURE   By necessity, a medieval monastery was conceived as both a center of communal spirituality and an independent economic community. The new approach to monastic planning ingeniously organized the monastery according to Benedictine principles, laying out the monastery as a set of concentric zones. The outer zone was largely devoted to buildings and spaces needed for crafts and agricultural activities. At the center lay the spiritual nucleus of the

Fig. 34 Lorenzo Monaco, *Madonna Enthroned, from a ten-part altarpiece,* about 1395, Italy (Florence). Tempera and gilding on wood panel, H 123.7 cm (48 ¹¹/₁₆ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1976.22. Lorenzo was a monk in a Florentine monastery of the Camaldolese order; he illuminated manuscripts as well as painting altarpieces and devotional images.

THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT AND THE MEDIEVAL MONASTERY

In the early 800s, monks adopted the *Rule* of St. Benedict for all monasteries in the Carolingian Empire, and monastery plans became architectural expressions of its guidelines for communal life (fig. 35). In Chapter 33, for example, Benedict writes of the voluntary poverty and communal life of the monastery:

No one, without leave of the abbot, shall presume to give, or receive, or keep as his own, anything whatsoever; neither book, nor table, nor pen; nothing at all. All things are to be common to all....[9]

Chapter 66 calls for an isolated setting for the monastery, its economic independence, and its housing of crafts (fig. 35E):

[The monastery] ought, if possible, to be so constructed as to contain within it all the necessaries, that is, water, mill, garden and [places for] the various crafts which are exercised within a monastery, so that there be no occasion for monks to wander abroad....

A centralized cloister (fig. 35A) expressed monastic isolation, enclosure, and community; it also connected spaces set aside for specific activities called for in the *Rule*. The daily round of prayer, called the Divine Office, is specified in Chapter 16, which names the appointed hours:

The prophet says, 'Seven times I have sung Thy praises.' This sacred number of seven will be kept by us if we perform the duties of our service in the hours of Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Evensong, and Compline. It was of these day hours the prophet said, 'Seven times a day I have sung Thy praises,' for of the night watches the same prophet says, 'At midnight I arose to confess to Thee.' At these times, therefore, let us give praise to our Creator for His just judgments, that is, at Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Evensong, and Compline, and at night let us rise to confess to Him.

Chapter 52 sites the church, referred to as the "Oratory" as the place to be devoted exclusively to prayer (fig. 35B):

Let the Oratory be what its name signifies, and let nothing else be done or discussed there. When the 'Work of God' is ended let all depart in strict silence, in the reverence of God, so that the brother who may wish to pray privately may not be hindered by the misconduct of another.

Chapter 22 calls for a special place and manner of sleeping (fig. 35G):

If it be possible let [the monks] all sleep in a common dormitory.... In this way the monks shall always be ready to rise quickly when the signal is given and hasten each one to come before his brother to the Divine Office, and yet with all gravity and modesty.... When they rise for the Divine Office let them gently encourage one another, because of the excuses made by those that are drowsy.

Arrangements for eating are discussed in Chapter 38 (fig. 35K):

There ought always to be reading [of a sacred text] whilst the brethren eat at table. Silence shall be kept, so that no whispering, nor noise, save the voice of the reader alone, be heard there.

Finally, Chapter 66 calls for the monks' familiarity with the Rule (fig. 35H):

We wish this Rule *to be read frequently in the community so that no brother may plead ignorance as an excuse.*

From the Carolingian world, the new type of monastery with cloister passed to the Romanesque and Gothic eras, where it exhibited increasingly complex forms of sculptural embellishment (figs. 7, 13, and 37).
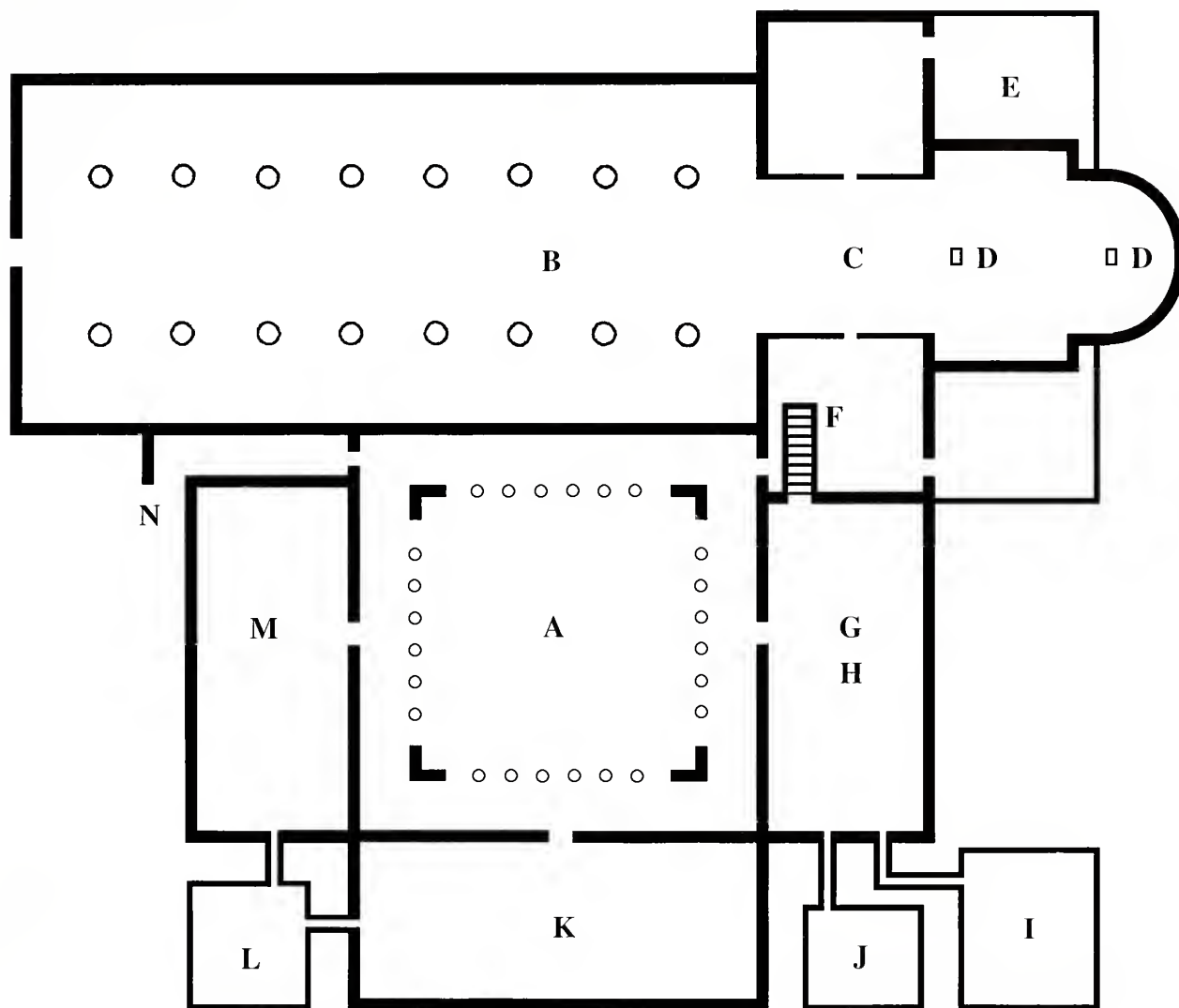
Fig. 35. The plan of a medieval monastery with cloister. This drawing is adapted from the *Plan of St. Gall*, the earliest surviving architectural plan of the Middle Ages. Created around 820, it shows the layout of a Carolingian Benedictine monastery. Similar plans were used throughout the Romanesque and Gothic eras. The plan makes provision for the following spaces: A) cloister; B) church (oratory), C) choir (part of the church set aside for monks to chant prayers; D) altars; E) scriptorium and library (for the production and storage of books); F) night stairs (connecting the dormitory with the church for nightly prayers); G) dormitory on second floor, over H) the chapter house (set aside for meetings and the reading of chapters of the *Rule* of St. Benedict); I) privy; J) bath house and laundry; K) refectory (for communal dining with reading); L) kitchen; M) cellar and larder (for provisions); and N) entrance to the cloister.

Fig. 36. Capital with kneeling monk (right) and priest (left). Pontaut, 1931.86.

choir, the space set aside for the chanting of prayer. Near the dormitory lay a communal meeting room called the chapter house. Here the monks held daily meetings to conduct mundane business but also listened to the reading of one of the chapters of the *Rule* of St. Benedict. Another building forming a side of the cloister was the refectory. Set aside for dining, it was usually situated opposite the church at the southern end of the cloister. A variety of buildings, including storage facilities for both kitchen and refectory, might be on the western arcade. In function, and as a symbol of enclosure, the cloister was the perfect expression of the monastic way of life.

monastic community, a connected series of spaces reserved exclusively for the monks and their daily activities. They included a church for the celebration of the mass and daily prayer, a room for daily meetings of the monastic community, a dormitory for sleeping, a refectory for eating, a kitchen for cooking, and a storage area for food and drink. Most importantly, these essential spaces were organized around a courtyard—the cloister—to unify the monastery's central zone.

The cloister was most perfectly realized in plan, form, and artistic embellishment during the Romanesque era (fig. 37). In most Benedictine monasteries of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the cloister provided access to water, fresh air, and natural light on a sunny day, while its arcaded walkways provided shelter from hot sun, snow, or rain. The cloister walkways and buildings also connected spaces essential to the daily life of a Benedictine monk (see fig. 35). On one side, generally the north, lay the church, to be entered for prayer seven times a day and once at night. To make nighttime prayer as convenient as possible, the dormitory was placed adjacent to the church and constructed with a set of stairs leading down to the church

ART OF THE CLOISTER   Within the private world of the cloister, monks or nuns used art to honor God but also as a source of spiritual inspiration. A monk contemplating the capitals in the cloister of St.-Pons-de-Thomières, for example, would be reminded of such matters as the courage and steadfast example of the martyred St. Pons (fig. 28), the certainty of the Last Judgment (fig. 23), and the perils of damnation (fig. 24). For many of the encloistered, the use of such imagery could reinforce their spiritual vigor, sustaining them in their lives of renunciation. For some monks, however, the use of art was seen as inappropriate to the spiritual environment of the monastery. This ascetic attitude was especially important in the ideology of the Cistercians, an order of monks founded during the late eleventh century. During the Romanesque era, when they enjoyed great success, the Cistercians minimized the use of art and rich materials in their churches, banishing sculpture from the cloister altogether. Ironically, a praying monk is sculpted on the arcade from the Cistercian monastery of Pontaut (fig. 36). Dating to about 1400, it is the product of an era in which the Cistercians had long abandoned the rigors of their early artistic policies.

ThOSE WhO fIGhT:
ThE WARRIOR ARISTOCRACY

While the battle of good and evil was the central drama of monastic life, real battles also took place in the medieval world. As in many historic eras, the evolution of weapons, the formation of armies, and the status of warriors had an enormous effect on the organization of medieval society. It is not surprising that in his overview of society Bishop Adalbero saw soldiers—"those who fight"—as one of the three groups essential to Christian civilization. Writing at the beginning of the eleventh century, Adalbero lived at a time when an emerging concept of secular leadership called for a combination of boldness, birth from a noble bloodline, and military expertise.

The hereditary nobility in the Middle Ages included kings, but its most numerous members were regional lords, whose domains ranged from enormous dukedoms to small manors. Whatever their place in the hierarchy of power, the primary pursuits of noblemen were holding and managing of landed estates, administering justice, and conducting war. They constructed the era's impressive fortified castles and palatial houses and commissioned a wide variety of works of art. The latter included objects expressing secular authority and power, tomb sculptures, luxury objects associated with the lavish practices of courtly life (fig. 42), and many religious objects used in private devotion. Whether through pious generosity or fear of damnation, many members of the nobility were also benefactors to monasteries and churches, providing lands, funds, and works of art.

While few members of the secular nobility are depicted in the Cloister Gallery, a number of works embody their values or represent their appearances, if only indirectly. This is particularly true of their weapons and armor. The importance of a nobleman's skill in the use of arms, acquired through lengthy and arduous practice, is attested
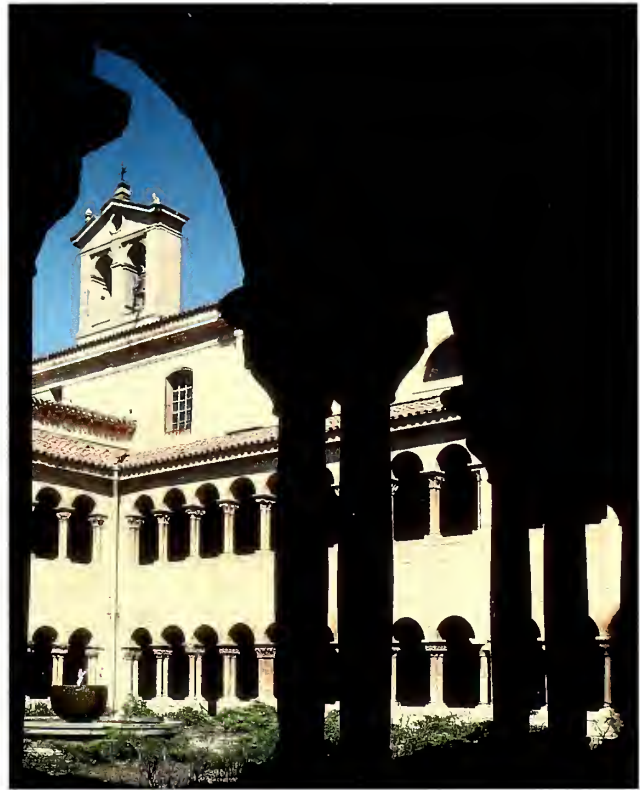
Fig. 37. Romanesque cloister of Santo Domingo de Silos, near Burgos, northern Spain. Still an active monastery, its lower arcade contains some of the finest Romanesque sculpture in existence.

in this twelfth-century passage by Roger of Hoveden, in which he describes the military training of the sons of King Henry II of England:

They strove to outdo others in handling weapons. They realized that without practice the art of war did not come naturally when it was needed. No athlete can fight tenaciously who never received any blows: he must see his blood flow and hear his teeth crack under the fist of his adversary, and when he is thrown to the ground he must fight on with all his might and not lose courage. The oftener he falls, the more determinedly he must spring to his feet again. Anyone who can do that can engage in battle confidently.[10]

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Fig. 38. Capital with knights. St.-Pons, 1929.206.

A few works in the Cloister Gallery give an excellent idea of the arms and armor necessary to the life of a nobleman. This is due to a fascinating aspect of medieval artistic practice: when representing events of the distant past—biblical episodes or scenes from Roman history, for example—artists often depicted people in the clothing of contemporary medieval society. Thus, a representation of a biblical king might wear the robes and crown of a contemporary one, or an ancient soldier the armor of a medieval knight.

An example of this artistic practice can be seen on a Gothic capital from St.-Pons-de-Thomières that depicts Christ's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (fig. 38). Two Roman soldiers who struggle with the Apostles—one flies head over heels!—are excellent representations of medieval

knights. Each wears a *hauberk* (pronounced HAW-burk), a garment of interlocking metal rings that had short sleeves, was open at the bottom, and was donned over the head like a sweater. Each soldier wears a mail hood to shield head and neck, and *chausses*, mail "hose" to protect the legs. The hem of a cloth undergarment shows below the hauberk of the soldier to the left, and a belt circles his waist. The latter is an important detail, for a belt not only helped a knight carry his sheathed sword but also eased the burden of mail armor's considerable weight. The carved capital gives a clear picture of medieval armor typical of the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, with but two exceptions—when fully armed for battle, a knight in mail armor would also have carried a shield and worn a helmet composed of protective plates of iron or steel.

KNIGHTS AND HORSES   Noblemen, of course, did not fight as ordinary foot soldiers. As part of the premier weapon system of medieval Europe, the elite heavy cavalry, they fought on horseback. Several works in the Museum collections reflect the world of the mounted knight, but none more fully than *St. George and the Dragon*, an anonymous painting of the late fifteenth century (fig. 39). Although the setting of this legendary tale is the Roman Empire, the depictions of military equipment and secular architecture reflect the world of the very late Middle Ages.

Like St. Pons, St. George was a legendary Christian martyr of the third century. The subject of the painting, which was this popular saint's most famous deed, is his rescue of a young woman from an evil dragon. The monster was ravaging a pagan city, which appeased the beast by sacrificing to it, every day, one of its youth. St. George happened upon this desperate situation just as the daughter of the city's king, selected by lot as the next victim, bravely headed to her death. According to the *Golden Legend*, a thirteenth-century book devoted to the deeds of the saints: ". . . at the very moment when the

dragon drew nigh to devour the maiden, St. George, making the sign of the cross, set upon him and slew him with one blow."[11] The maiden survived, and, awed by the saint's great faith and incredible courage, she and her city converted to Christianity.

In the painting's rendition of the story, St. George is the very image of a late medieval nobleman in full battle array. His plate armor, which is covered by a cloth garment called a *surcoat*, reflects an advance in protection over the mail armor of earlier centuries (see sidebar page 51). Particularly important is his spear, which, with the sword, were the essential weapons of the medieval knight on horseback. Also depicted with accuracy is the war saddle; provided with stirrups and a high front and back, it gave a mounted knight the secure seating necessary for the effective use of his weapons. Equipped in this way, a knight became one with his horse, using the spear to deliver deadly force to his opponents, whether dragons or enemy soldiers. Needless to say, such a potent fighting unit—expensive to arm, train, and maintain—was particularly effective in a massed charge of cavalry.

ÞERALÐRY AND ThE ShIELÐ   Another significant object depicted in *St. George and the Dragon* is the shield embellished with the cross. While this symbolizes his status as a warrior of Christ, it also reflects both military and symbolic concerns of the warrior class. Essential for protecting a knight, the shield also took on artistic significance during the Romanesque era. In the middle of the twelfth century, artists began to decorate shields with combinations of symbols—geometric patterns, plants, animals—which formed the basis for the new art of *heraldry*. While at first associated with warriors in general, heraldic symbols soon developed a strong association with members of the nobility, who passed on their unique imagery from generation to generation as personal property. As a consequence, heraldic devices became

Fig. 39. *Saint George and the Dragon,* about 1480–90, France (Burgundy?). Oil on wood panel, H 49.5 cm (19 ½ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1943.30.

associated with the pride in lineage characteristic of medieval aristocrats.

Excellent examples of the art of heraldry may be seen on a fourteenth-century enameled *morse,* an ornamental clasp worn by a medieval priest in vestments (fig. 40). At the center, a kneeling figure in robes prays to the Virgin Mary and infant Christ, who are flanked by Sts. Peter and Paul. Just below, the words *Iacobus Garand Presbiter* ("Jacob Garand Priest") most likely identify the churchman who

Fig. 40. *Morse,* mid 14th century, France. Champlevé enamel on copper, with silver inlay and gilded copper appliqués, H 17 cm (6 11/16 in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1950.248.

commissioned the clasp. To left and right are heraldic shields possibly relating the lineage of Jacob or that of a later owner. As many churchmen came from the ranks of the secular nobility, it is not surprising that a heraldic device could be used in an ecclesiastical context.

CHIVALRY   *St. George and the Dragon* reflects not only the arms and insignia of the late medieval knight but also a concept of ideal knighthood—*chivalry*—that began to emerge in the 1100s. While the word chivalry had no single definition shared by all medieval writers, some of its essential qualities are clear. Deriving from *chevalier,* a French word denoting a mounted warrior, chivalry had a military connotation, but one increasingly associated with knightly ethics and courtly sophistication. The ideal knight was to be skilled in arms, loyal, and courageous, but in his non-military life to have elegant manners, dress well, and be kind.

An important aspect of chivalry was the association of the warrior's honor with Christian ideals. Knights were to fight courageously in defense of the faith and to protect the weak, but not for personal glory. The painting of *St. George and the Dragon* is a perfect expression of this ideal—the warrior saint fights boldly to protect a helpless city and its victims, does so in the name of Christ, and converts the city to Christianity. More specifically, he fights to rescue a beautiful young woman. The story's sublimated sexuality reflects one of the strongest ideals of chivalry—a knight's gentleness to women—but also expresses the late medieval interest in *romance,* a new model for the relationship of the sexes. Its essential qualities were expressed in an aristocratic literary genre, the romance, which emerged in the twelfth century in the south of France. Devoted to fantastic stories that often combine love, sophisticated courtliness, and deeds of valor, this new form of vernacular poetry provides important insights into the secular world of the aristocracy.

CHIVALRY AND ROMANCE   Romance is the subject of several of the Museum's Gothic ivories, including a luxuriously carved box (fig. 41). Probably made in northern France or Flanders in the late fourteenth century, its imagery is devoted to secular romantic scenes. The box is composed of six rectangular pieces of ivory joined together with copper nails, reinforced with decorated strips of gilded copper, and embellished with a copper lock. The box is lavishly decorated with thirty-one small scenes distributed in registers on the box's lid, front, back, and sides.

Many of the scenes depicted are typical of romance imagery. On the lid, just above the handle, are three successive scenes that show the progression of love. In the first, a couple joins arms and gazes longingly at one another. In the second, the young woman holds an object, almost certainly a gift from her lover, whose backward glance indicates that the meeting is clandestine. In the third scene,

Fig. 41. *Box with Romance Scenes*, about 1350, Northern France or Flanders. Ivory with copper mounts, H 10.4 cm (4 ¹/₂ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1950.302.

the man has dropped his hood, and caresses the body of his beloved. In the lower register the couple crowns one another. At the left, a real crown passes from one to the other, while in the next scene the woman crowns her kneeling lover with a chaplet, a leafy garland symbolizing eternal desire.

While focusing on romance and fantasy, the box's imagery mirrors important aspects of the world of the warrior aristocracy. A case in point is the frequent depiction of secular architecture with a military connotation. On the front of the box, in the scene at the upper right, a figure armed with a dagger approaches a castle gate. With the exception of relative scale, the artist's representation conveys essential features of castles with considerable accuracy. Two towers protect the opening of the gate, a

scheme typical of castles of the 1100s and later. The towers are round, a development that made them less vulnerable to attack by catapults than the square towers of earlier centuries. Similar forms are seen in *St. George and the Dragon* (fig. 39); its "city" is actually a castle, whose round towers are clear examples of French secular architecture of the late Gothic era. In the ivory, the tops of the tower walls are lined with crenellations, the tooth-like arrangement that alternated protective walls for defenders with openings from which they could launch arrows or other deadly missiles. The gateway arch also shows the lower edge of a portcullis, a grid of wood or iron that could be lowered to seal a castle gate. Finally, the castle gate is clearly composed of the carefully shaped blocks of stone typical of masonry in the Gothic era.

Fig. 42. *Aquamanile* (vessel for washing the hands in the form of a lion), about 1400, Germany (Nuremberg). Brass, H 31.7 cm (12 ½ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1953.74.

ᴛboꙅe wbo woꙅk: peaꙅanꚍꙅ, buꙅgbeꙅꙅ, anꙅ aꙅꚍiꙅꚍꙅ

At the bottom of his social scheme, Bishop Adalbero placed "those who work," people who did manual labor for their living, particularly rural peasants. Throughout the Middle Ages, the vast majority of the population was composed of country folk, whose hard lives revolved around the cycles of agriculture. Given the elitism of the medieval world and its religious outlook, it is no accident that Adalbero ranked workers last. As the Bible notes, the necessity to till the soil was part of God's punishment of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:17), so medieval Christian belief contributed to the era's condescending view toward manual labor.

ᴘᴇᴀꙅᴀɴᴛꙅ   While we know little of the art made by medieval peasants, they appear with frequency in works of art intended for the church or private individuals. Artists often depicted them, like knights, in scenes representing episodes from the distant past. Toledo's fourteenth-century embroidery devoted to the Virgin Mary presents an excellent example (fig. 17). It includes peasants in a representation of the *Annunciation to Joachim,* a legendary event associated with Mary's birth. Joachim, distressed that he and his wife Anne had been childless through many years of marriage, fled in despair into the countryside to visit his shepherds. There an angel appeared to him, telling him that his wife was pregnant with a daughter—Mary— who would one day give birth to Christ. To show the rural setting of this miraculous episode, the designer of the tapestry included a pasture, sheep, and two shepherds, both of whom wear the short tunics and hooded cloaks typical of medieval peasant attire.

Another way in which peasants appeared in medieval art was in illustrative cycles called the *Labors of the Months.* Symbols of the passage of time, such imagery associated each of the twelve months with a form of agricultural activity appropriate to its time of year. The *Labors* often appear in the sculpted doorways of medieval churches, and even more frequently in the calendars of medieval manuscripts. Toledo's collection of medieval books includes a *Book of Hours,* written and decorated in France around 1500, whose calendar includes a full sequence of the monthly activities. Particularly interesting is the fascinating depiction of autumn planting that embellishes the calendar page for October (fig. 44). In a miniature painting that shows the late medieval interest in pictorial space, peasants work in a field framed by distant castles and a church. Picturesque details, these architectural elements also symbolize the aristocrats and churchmen who shaped and dominated the lives of peasants. Reflecting the social realities of the medieval world, the picture is less

a kNiGHT iN sHiNiNG aRMOR

One of the Cloister Gallery's most detailed depictions of a knight is part of a stained glass depiction of the *Crucifixion* fabricated in Flanders or Burgundy about 1490. The imagery highlights the words of a *centurion*, a Roman soldier mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as a witness to the death of Christ. Awed by what he has seen, he says: *Vere Dei Filius erat iste* ("Truly he was the Son of God"), words recorded in Matthew 27:54.

As in the representations of Roman soldiers on the St.-Pons arcade (fig. 38), the artist has rendered the centurion as a contemporary knight. However, the ringed mail of the thirteenth-century relief carving has given way to plate armor similar to that worn by St. George (fig. 39). Arms makers of the later Middle Ages devised this new form of protective attire to defend against thrusting weapons or arrows that could penetrate mail armor with ease. Better protected, the fifteenth-century knight wears metal plates that are cleverly hinged so as to allow free movement of the body. Obvious features include shoulder plates called *pauldrons*, articulated metal gloves called *gauntlets*, and a padded cloth tunic—called a *jupon* (Jooh-POHN*)*—that covers the plates protecting the torso. The centurion's headgear appears to be a stylized version of a helmet with visor, which was typical of late medieval head protection. A slightly earlier form of armor—mostly of plate, but with some mail—protected the cavalry soldiers of England and France at the famous Battle of Agincourt in 1415.

Fig. 43. *Knight*, detail of *Crucifixion*, 15ᵗʰ century, Flanders or Burgundy. Stained glass, H (overall) 114.1 cm (45 in.); (knight) 58 cm (22 7/8 in.). Gift of George H. Ketcham, 1926.6.

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accurate in some of its details. The peasant who is scattering seed, for example, walks in front of the plowman, rather than behind him. The illogic of this sequence is compounded by the fact that sowing followed another process—harrowing—that prepared the plowed earth for seed. Thus, like many representations of labor in medieval art, the October image does not give us a grittily realistic image of peasant life but an idyllic fantasy. On the other hand, many of the painting's details are quite reliable. The clothing depicted is plausible, and the patterns in the field, called ridge and furrow, accurately reflect those produced by repeated plowing. The plow itself is a heavy, wheeled device drawn by a team of horses, a combination used only in the later Middle Ages.

BURGHERS   While many workers spent their lives in the fields, many also left for the towns. They formed a fourth important group of medieval people, not specifically mentioned by Adalbero. These were the *burghers,* middle class people who lived in towns and made their livings through craft, commerce, or some other form of non-agricultural labor. Almost nonexistent in northern Europe

October

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Noue͂ ber.
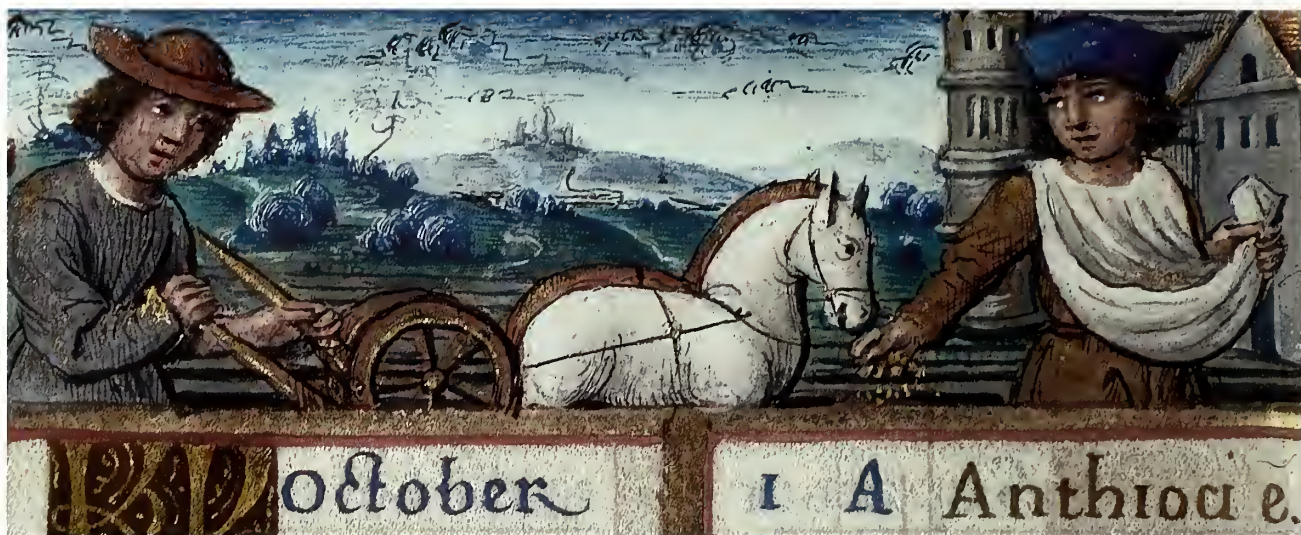
9   d   Felicis eͣpi.

Fig. 44. *October*, calendar illustration of peasants plowing and sowing, from Book of Hours of the Virgin, about 1500, France. Vellum, H 13.2 cm (5 3/16 in.). Museum Purchase, 1955.28.

Fig. 44. *November*, calendar illustration of peasants feeding pigs with acorns, from Book of Hours of the Virgin, about 1500. Vellum, H 13.2 cm (5 3/16 in.). Museum Purchase, 1955.28.

during the early Middle Ages, they began their rise to significance at precisely the time when Adalbero was writing, the early eleventh century. Like peasants, burghers stood outside the medieval elite. In the later Middle Ages, however, many of them acquired wealth, power, and influence. Like the landed nobility, they commissioned works of art with secular themes as well as religious works intended for private devotion.

In the Gothic era, an increased focus on Christ's humanity and Mary's maternal compassion was accompanied by an expanded interest in personal devotion. Many devout lay people—whether nobles or burghers—adapted routines of daily prayer and contemplation more generally associated with the lives of monks, nuns, or churchmen. This phenomenon motivated the production of many works of art meant to embellish personal devotion. Such works, including Toledo's *Polyptych* (fig. 16) and *Books of Hours* (figs. 44, 45, and 49), survive in great numbers, strong evidence of the growing popularity of personal worship. While prayer books provided texts for worship, works like the ivory shrine served as objects of prayer and contemplation. In the towns, many burghers worshipped privately in their homes, dedicating small spaces—sometimes including a private altar— to devotional activities.

ARTISTS   Whatever their status, medieval people who commissioned works of art relied upon the skills and talents of artists, who in the later Middle Ages were usually burghers, who had a lower status than artists today. This was so because the work of artists, no matter how skilled, depended upon manual labor. Indeed, the same Latin word—*artifices*—was used to designate both craftsmen and artists. In both cases the practitioner—the artist or craftsman—was thought of as far less important than the person who commissioned a work of art.

We will never know the names of many medieval artists and even less in the way of biographical details about them. Our current lack of knowledge about artists' identities stems from several fundamental causes: medieval artists signed their works with less frequency than today; medieval people did not keep as extended records as do we; many records that were made have not survived; and people simply were not as interested in artists as we are today.

Sources that do survive—signatures or inscriptions, letters, artists' treatises, or contracts, for example—provide a great deal of information about a few artists in particular, and even more about how artists worked in general. They reveal, for instance, that the common belief that medieval artists were anonymous monks is simply not true. This belief is founded upon the scarcity of artistic signatures, the large quantity of art produced in early medieval monasteries, and the fact that religious art was created to honor God. The situation in early monastic settings is complicated by evidence that some artists working for monasteries were secular professionals. What is true in part for early medieval artists is true in general for later ones. Romanesque and Gothic artists were both male and female, secular and religious. Some amateur artists were members of the nobility or the religious elite, and some worked at the arts on a part-time basis. Most, however, were full-time professionals participating in the commercial life of towns. They often were members of guilds, professional organizations in towns that collectively regulated the training of apprentices, prices, the use of materials, the quality of the finished product, and many other matters. Within their own ranks, artists varied in professional stature according to their specialization and individual accomplishments: goldsmiths had a very high status, as did glass painters, fresco painters, and architects.

Fig. 46. *Jug*, about 1300, England (London?). Earthenware with lead glaze, H 30 cm (11 7/8 in.). Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey Bequest in Memory of her Father, Maurice A. Scott, 1968.74. A product of a medieval craftsman.

As a generality, it is clear that the status of the artist rose considerably in the Gothic era; this was particularly true for artists in Italy and architects in France. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in France, names and images of many architects have been preserved in funerary monuments and inscriptions, and a few of the architects were venerated for their design work and the coordinating of others' manual work. In spite of the artist's newfound status in the Late Middle Ages, medieval people apparently had little interest in biographical accounts of artists, a genre that became important only in the Renaissance.

While we know little of the lives of medieval artists, we know a great deal about their working methods. Much can be learned from close examination of the works themselves, supplemented by reading surviving texts from the Middle Ages that describe artistic processes. The most famous of these is *On Divers Arts,* written in Latin by one "Theophilus," pseudonym of a French master craftsman who lived during the twelfth century.

GEM CARVING   A look at three works in the Museum's collection shows the extraordinary skill of medieval artists, as well as their labor-intensive techniques. The earliest, an engraved rock crystal, is diminutive in scale but astounding in its detail (fig. 47). Probably made in Metz during the early ninth century, it depicts a cross surrounded by four winged figures: eagle, ox, lion, and man. These are the symbols of the Four Evangelists—Matthew (the man), Mark (the lion), Luke (the ox), and John (the eagle)—authors of the four Gospels, the opening books of the New Testament. Easily missed by visitors, the crystal is slightly more than two inches in height, with an elliptical shape, a flat back engraved with the cross and figures, and a lens-like outer surface that curves forward nearly an inch. Completely transparent and highly polished, at first sight it appears to be made of glass but is in fact a piece of rock crystal, a naturally occurring form of quartz.

Toledo's engraved rock crystal gem is one of but twenty to survive from the Middle Ages, all of which originated in the Frankish kingdom under the dynasty of kings known as the Carolingians (751–987). The production of such an object required a patron with the means to pay for a large and flawless piece of rock crystal—a rare find—as well as the craftsman's skill and time-intensive labor to shape, polish and engrave it. The craftsman's first job was to cut a crystal to the desired size and shape. This could be partly accomplished by securing the piece to a board with pitch and cutting it with an iron saw. We understand the process

thanks to the careful observations of Theophilus, who wrote the following about the cutting of crystals:

[Use] an iron saw and throw on sharp sand mixed with water. Have two men stand there to draw the saw and to throw on sand mixed with water unceasingly. This should be continued until the crystal is cut....[12]

Sand was the true abrasive, of course, as iron cannot touch the much harder quartz. Once cut to its rough shape, the rock crystal was given its final form and polish. Theophilus advises the craftsman how to shape rock crystal:

...rub it with both hands on a piece of hard sandstone, adding water, until it takes the shape you want to give it.[13]

Polishing was accomplished through rubbing the stone on a piece of lead embedded with emery, another mineral of great hardness and durability.

After he had achieved complete transparency and a high degree of reflectivity, the artist engraved the flat back of the rock crystal. As neither metal nor steel will scratch quartz, the artist drew the outlines of his design with a steel scriber in whose indented point was fixed a small gemstone. The engraved design was then carved with a bow-driven drill, a traditional tool in the handicrafts of the ancient and medieval worlds. Using a rounded metal bit embedded with emery, or some other form of hard abrasive, the artist cut out the areas between the outlines made with the scriber.

When originally made, Toledo's engraved crystal probably embellished the center of a cross, an altar, a reliquary, or the cover of a Gospel Book. Whatever its original context, its preciousness in the medieval world is reflected in the fact that it was re-used on the reliquary base in the thirteenth century.

ENAMELING   Another craft that is well represented in the Cloister Gallery is enameled metalwork. In making a work such as the Museum's *Book Cover* (fig. 6)

Fig. 47. *Gem with Cross and Symbols of the Four Evangelists*, mounted on the base of a reliquary. Gem: Metz (France), about 800–850; reliquary: Germany (Trier), early 13th century. H (gem) 5.5 cm (2 ¹/₈ in.). Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1950.287.

Fig. 48. Detail of *Chasse with Crucifixion*, fig. 29.

or the *Chasse with Crucifixion* (figs. 29 and 48), the artist employed a wide range of labor-intensive techniques. First, he drew the basic composition and then transferred the design to a thin copper plate. The artist then cut shallow troughs in those portions of the plate reserved for enamel, a technique known as *champlevé* (pronounced sham-pleh-VAY). Glass powder (frit) was prepared from pieces of glass using a technique described by Theophilus:

Now take all the pieces of tested glass and put them one at a time in the fire and when each one becomes red-hot throw it into a copper pot containing water and it will immediately burst into tiny fragments. Quickly crush these fragments with a pestle until they are fine.... Prepare each color in this way.[14]

Once the glass powder was finely ground, the artist carefully placed portions of appropriate colors into the cells excavated in the copper plate, and then fired the work. The glass particles melted, adhered to the copper plate, and formed richly colored sections of the composition. As the glass

shrank as it fused, the process had to be repeated until the level of the enamels was close to that of the copper plate.

With firing completed, the artist or an assistant polished the enamel surfaces, achieving the lustrous surface so often encountered in medieval art. The artist would also incise the interior details of the figures—the anatomical details in Christ's torso and loincloth, for example. The artist used a sheet of copper to form the heads, a technique called *repoussé* (pronounced ray-poo-SAY). He hammered them out from the rear, polished and engraved them, and attached them to the copper plate. Finally, the copper plate was gilded and the work was complete.

MAKING BOOKS   Clearly, the production of a medieval work of art required diligence, skill, technical knowledge, and a fine feeling for materials. This was especially true of the creation of an illustrated manuscript, which depended upon the talents of a variety of craftsmen and required an array of resources (fig. 49). Book production was generally a secular, commercial activity in the later Middle Ages, and specialized merchants supplied writing materials to shops that focused on the production of books. A manuscript's leaves, for example, came from the skins of animals. Through soaking, scraping, and finishing, workers processed them into sheets of parchment (from sheep) or vellum (from calves). Both had writing surfaces of superior quality and durability.

Within a workshop, scribes used a variety of implements to write the text on individual sheets laboriously ruled for columns and lines. They would also reserve spaces for decorated initials (see fig. 32), ornament, or illustrations. Using a variety of inks and paints, some acquired through wide-reaching trade networks, painters completed the program of artistic decoration, which sometimes included the use of gold. Finally, craftsmen sewed the finished leaves together, forming a binding using wooden boards for front and back covers. The boards were usually covered with
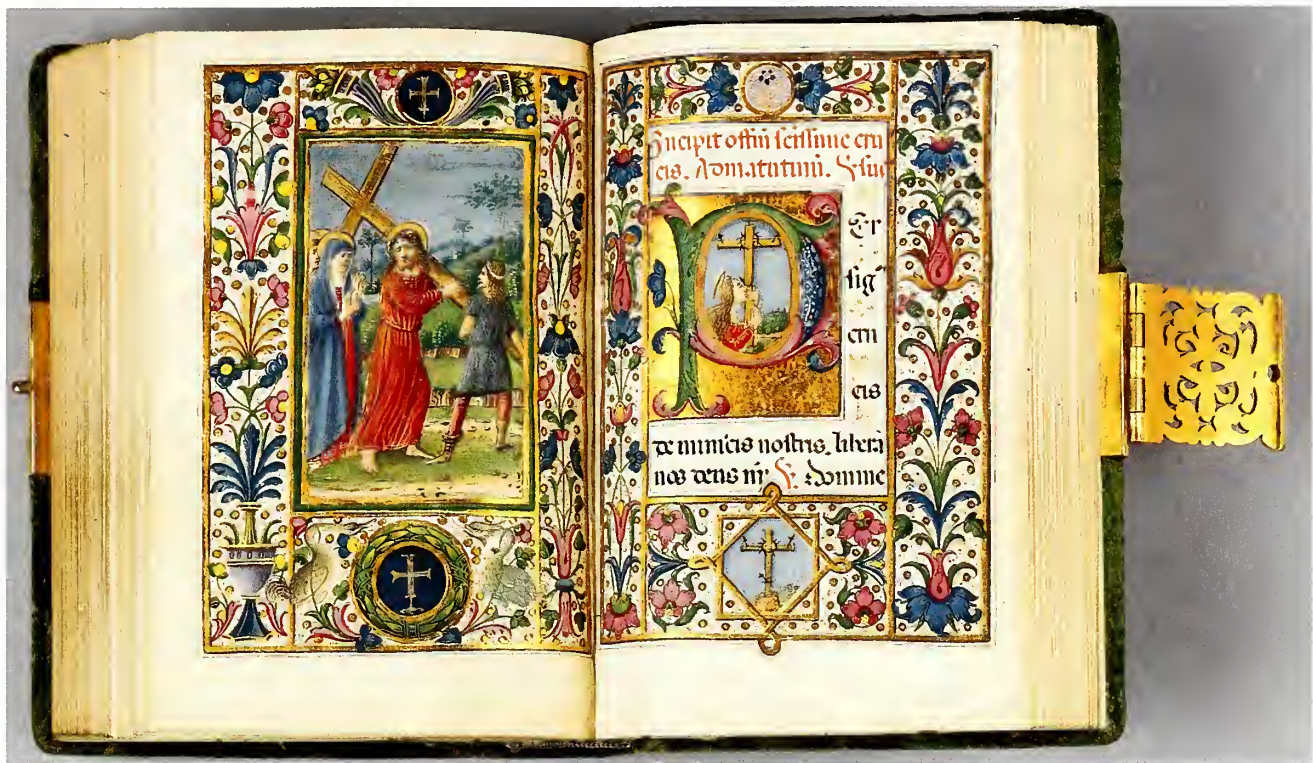
Fig. 49. Left: Minature painting of Christ carrying the Cross, with his mother Mary and St. Simeon, and right: initial "P" with St. Mary Magdalene adoring the Cross, from a Book of Hours, 1513–21, Northern Italy. Vellum. Museum Purchase, 1957.23. This manuscript was written for Pope Leo X, a member of the Medici family of Florence and a patron of art, literature, and science.

leather, but sumptuous volumes might receive more elaborate embellishment, like the *Book Cover* (fig. 6).

The intensity of the work involved in book production is indicated by the following inscription, written on the last leaf of a book by a twelfth-century scribe:

If you do not know how to write you will consider it no hardship, but if you want a detailed account of it let me tell you that the work is heavy; it makes the eyes misty, bows the back, crushes the ribs and belly, brings pain to the kidneys, and makes the body ache all over. Therefore, oh reader, turn the pages gently and keep your

fingers away from the letters, for as the hailstorm ruins the harvest of the land so does the unserviceable reader destroy the book and the writing. As the sailor welcomes the final harbor, so does the scribe the final line.[15]

As we approach our final line, we will conclude by examining another work made by medieval craftsmen. Devoted to the extraordinary cult of a twelfth-century saint, it summarizes almost every theme we have discussed in the course of this short book.

Fig. 50. *Chasse with Murder of St. Thomas Becket*, early 13th century, France (Limoges?).
Champlevé enamel and gilding on copper, H 12.4 cm (4 ⁷⁄₈ in.) Purchased with funds
from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1956.74.

VI
A Story for the Ages:
The Martyrdom of Becket

As we have seen, medieval art involved many people in many ways. Patrons initiated its creation, merchants provided its raw materials, artists labored to give it form, and audiences participated in its powerful messages. In addition, its subject matter often depicted a wide variety of human situations. An outstanding example is an enameled reliquary chasse—worn through many years of use—that is one of the Cloister Gallery's most interesting objects (fig. 48). It commemorates one of the most notorious events of the Middle Ages and attests to the vivid relationship of medieval art and life.

Empty today, the chasse once contained a relic of one of the most revered of medieval saints, Thomas Becket, who was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral on December 29, 1170. His fascinating story has been the subject of modern books, plays, and even a film, but his fame was far greater in the Middle Ages. Born the son of a London burgher, Becket became the close friend, political ally, and chief administrator of the English King Henry II. Wanting a friend and ally in the church, in 1162 Henry named Becket Archbishop of Canterbury, the most important ecclesiastical post in England. Trouble developed between the two when Thomas, rather than acquiescing in policies of Henry that were contrary to the interests of the clergy,

vehemently defended the rights of the Church over those of the royal government. So heated was the conflict that Becket, charged by the king with high crimes, fled England for a six-year, self-imposed exile in France. Following an apparent reconciliation with Henry, Becket returned to England in 1170, but their quarrel was quickly renewed. At a gathering of his nobles, the king, in a fit of exasperated rage, cried out, "What miserable drones and traitors have I nourished and promoted in my household, who let their lord be treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born clerk!"[16]

Driven by Henry's rebuke, four noblemen hastened to Canterbury, intent on arresting the archbishop. After a heated exchange with Becket in his palace, they briefly withdrew, gathered their weapons, and pursued him into the church. Confronting Becket near an altar, they attempted to seize him. When he resisted, they attacked him with their swords, one blow cutting off the top of his head. Leaving his bleeding, lifeless body on the floor of the cathedral, the noblemen withdrew, one saying "Let's be off, knights, this fellow won't get up again."[17] Becket's colleagues carried his body to the sanctuary of the church, while others gathered his freshly spilled blood. Seen by many as a holy martyr, Becket soon had miracles associated with his remains, leading to his canonization as a saint in 1173.

As we have seen, medieval belief put a premium on the relics of saints, so it is not surprising that churchmen worked zealously to commemorate Becket's. The clergy at Canterbury built a great shrine over his tomb—to be visited by thousands of pilgrims like those featured in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*—while churchmen in more distant places obtained portions of the blood he had shed on the cathedral floor. Once acquired, a relic needed a suitable container for its display on or near an altar. Many churchmen purchased them from the skilled metalworkers of Limoges, where craftsmen fabricated more than a hundred of the type now on display in Toledo.

Unfortunately, we will never know the identity of the person who commissioned or made Toledo's reliquary, but the subject matter provides a clear idea about how medieval people felt about Becket's martyrdom. Decorated in enamel, the chasse depicts it in an expressive Romanesque style that conveys the outrage of his murder.

A single knight brings his sword down upon Thomas's head, an accurate and terrifying detail. Dressed in the vestments of a bishop and glorified with a halo of sanctity, Thomas receives the blow without defending himself. This detail accords with the account of Edward Grim, an eyewitness to the murder: "he [would not] take any forethought or employ any strategem whereby he might escape."[18] In the image, Thomas stands before an altar that supports a Eucharistic chalice. Although he was not engaged in worship when killed, the altar establishes the shocking detail that violence had reached into the very sanctuary of the church. More important, the chalice shows that the martyr's blood, like that of Christ, is sacred. We can imagine the power such a relic had for a medieval worshipper, and how effectively the artist's skill helped to convey it. Here is the essence of medieval art.

FURThER READING

MEDIEVAL ART AND ARChITECTURE

For histories of medieval art and architecture based upon style and chronology, see Janetta Rebold Benton, *Art of the Middle Ages* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002), or James Snyder, *Medieval Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, 4th–14th Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989). Important historic documents relating to medieval art are collected in two volumes edited by H. W. Janson, *Sources and Documents in the History of* Art (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971): Caecilia Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art, 300– 1150*, and Teresa G. Frisch, *Gothic Art, 1140–c.1450*.

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For medieval people and their essential relationships to society, see Jacques Le Goff, ed., *The Medieval World*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (London: Collins and Brown, 1990); Georges Duby, *The Three Orders; Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and Hans-Werner Goetz, *Life in the Middle Ages from the Seventh to the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Albert Wimmer (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). A thematic analysis of medieval society in one time and place is Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075–1225* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). Medieval attire is introduced in Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, trans. Caroline Beamish (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

Monks, nuns, and monastic life are the subject of C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 3rd edn. (New York: Longman, 2002). Constance Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave and Noble* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), is an introductory study of the medieval nobility. For medieval knights, warfare, and armor, see J. F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages*, trans. Sumner Willard and Mrs. R. W. Southern (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997). Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) summarizes important aspects of the culture of the nobility, while Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love; Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), provides a sumptuous overview of medieval romance in the visual arts.

For an excellent overview of Christian beliefs and practices in the later Middle Ages, see R. N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215–c. 1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For the importance of medieval relics, see Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra; Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). See Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) for Becket's tumultuous relationship with Henry II, and for the "afterlife" of Becket's relics, see John Butler, *The Quest for Becket's Bones* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

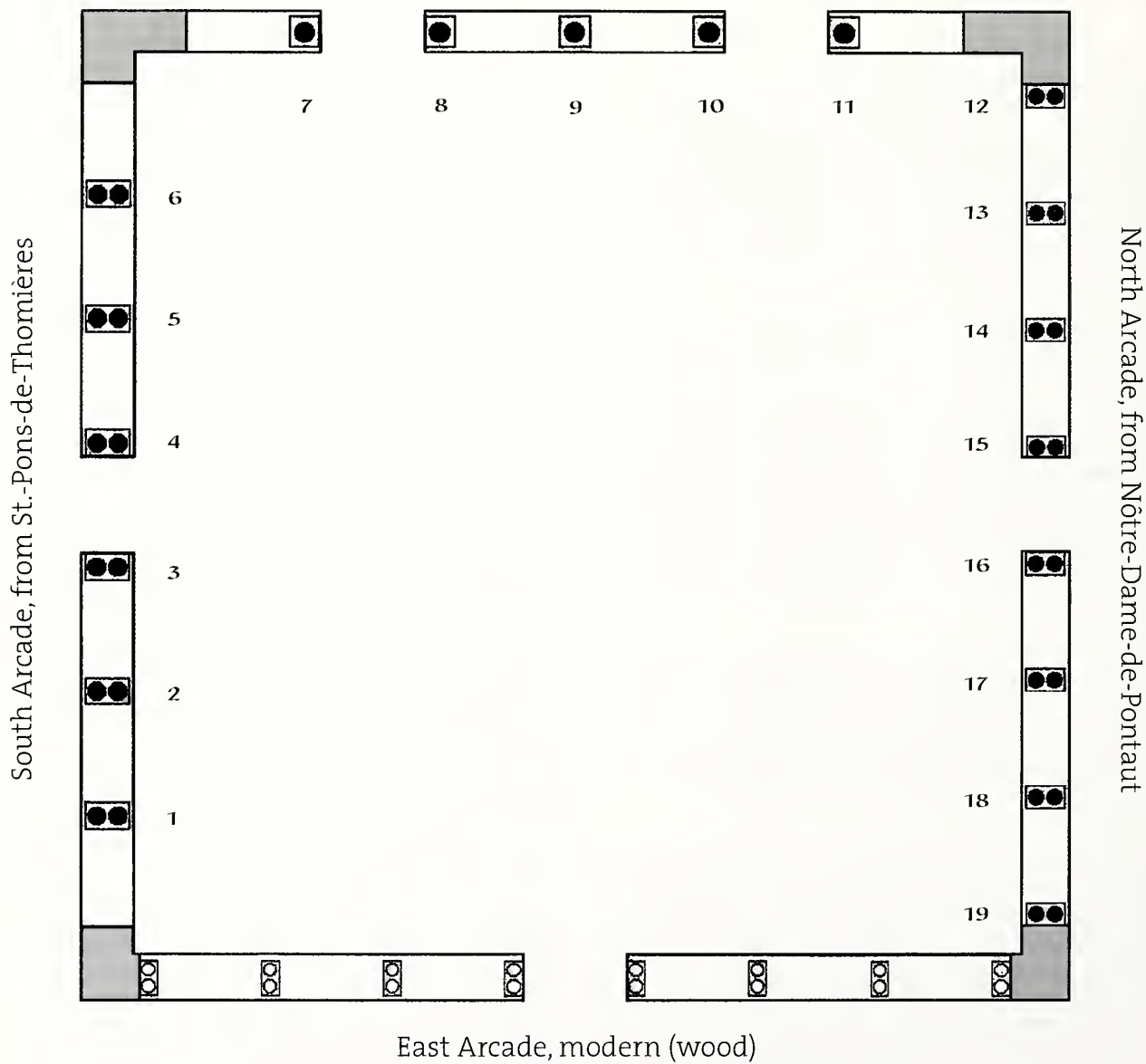## ARTISTS AND MEDIEVAL CRAFTS

For the medieval artist, see E. Castelnuovo, "The Artist," in Jacques Le Goff, ed., *The Medieval World*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (London: Collins and Brown, 1990) 211–241; Andrew Martindale, *The Rise of the Artist in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972); J. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and Virginia Wylie Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967). An important treatise by a medieval artist is Theophilus, *On Divers Arts*, trans. John G. Hawthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith (New York: Dover, 1979).

For introductions to various crafts important to the art of the Cloister Gallery, see introductory volumes in the series *Medieval Craftsmen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press): Paul Binski, *Painters* (1991); Saran Browne, *Glass-Painters* (1991); John Cherry, *Goldsmiths* (1992); Nicola Coldstream, *Masons and Sculptors* (1991); Christopher De Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators* (1992); and Kay Staniland, *Embroiderers* (1991). A fascinating overview of medieval books is provided in Christopher De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*, 2nd edn. (London: Phaidon Press, 1994).

A marvelous exhibition catalogue published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art provides the context for much of the metalwork in the Cloister Gallery: *Enamels of Limoges 1100–1350* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996). An equally useful introduction to Gothic ivories—including several of Toledo's—is an exhibition by the Detroit Institute of Arts, *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

West Arcade, in the style of St.-Michel-de-Cuxa (from Espira d'Agly?)

South Arcade, from St.-Pons-de-Thomières

North Arcade, from Nôtre-Dame-de-Pontaut

East Arcade, modern (wood)

sculpted capitals
in the cloister gallery
with Museum accession numbers, subject matter, and dates
(Capital numbers begin at lower left of diagram and run clockwise)

Arcade from St.-Pons-de-Thomières (south side of gallery)

1	1929.207	The Martyrdom of St. Pons	about 1150
2	1929.203	The Trial of St. Pons and St. Pons Thrown to the Bears	about 1150
3	1929.205	Early Life of St. Pons: Baptism and Refusal to Worship Idols	about 1220
4	1929.204	Christ at Gethsemane, Betrayal of Christ	about 1220
6	1929.208	The Last Judgment and the Condemned Led to Hell	about 1220

Arcade in the style of St.-Michel-de-Cuxa (Espira d'Agly?) (west side of gallery)

7	1934.93A	Capital with foliage, volutes, and animal masks	about 1150
8	1934.93B	Capital with paired doves and volutes	about 1150
9	1934.93C	Capital with winged lions	about 1150
10	1934.93D	Capital with eagles and volutes	about 1150
11	1934.93E	Capital with foliage and volutes	about 1150

Arcade from Nôtre-Dame-de-Pontaut (north side of gallery)

12	1931.81	Capital with foliage, animal heads, and Gothic ornament	about 1400
13	1931.82	Capital with animals and scenes of ecclesiatical life	about 1400
14	1931.83	Capital with scenes of ecclesiastical life	about 1400
15	1931.84	Capital with the Romance of Barlaam and Josephat	about 1400
16	1931.85	Capital with intertwining hybrid monsters	about 1400
17	1931.86	Capital with churchmen and monks	about 1400
18	1931.87	Capital with intertwining hybrid monsters	about 1400
19	1931.88	Capital with foliage	about 1400
	1931.89	Capital with intertwining hybrid monsters (not installed)	about 1400

The wood columns of the modern arcade on the east side of Cloister Gallery are based upon fifteenth-century supports at the *Hôtel Dieu* (hospital) at Beaune, as drawn by the nineteenth-century French architect Viollet-le-Duc.

NOTES

[1] Caecilia Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art 300–1150* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971) 124.

[2] Christopher Daniel, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066–1500* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 2.

[3] Rosaline and Christopher Brooke, *Popular Religion in the Middle Ages; Western Europe 1000–1300* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984) 146.

[4] Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 69.

[5] Brown, *Cult of Saints* (above note 4) 4.

[6] Adalbero of Laon, *Carmen,* lines 295–296; quoted in Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 13.

[7] Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art* (above note 1) 19.

[8] Roger Hinks, *Carolingian Art: A Study of Early Medieval Painting and Sculpture in Western Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971) 97.

[9] All selections are from *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, trans. Francis Aidan Cardinal Gasquet (London: Chatto and Windus, 1925).

[10] Roger of Hoveden, *Chronica,* quoted in J. F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages,* trans. Sumner Willard and Mrs. R. W. Southern (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997) 28.

[11] *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine,* trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Arno Press, 1969) 235.

[12] Theophilus, *On Divers Arts,* trans. John G. Hawthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith (New York: Dover, 1979) 191.

[13] Theophilus, *On Divers Arts,* 189.

[14] Theophilus, *On Divers Arts,* 126–127.

[15] Albertine Gaur, *A History of Calligraphy* (New York: Cross River Press, 1994) 72.

[16] Edward Grim, quoted in Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 235.

[17] Edward Grim, quoted in Barlow, *Thomas Becket,* 247.

[18] Edward Grim, "Martyrdom," in *The Becket Controversy,* ed. Thomas M. Jones (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1970) 54.

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